

# 2016 COLLEGE FOOTBALL Preview



## Rio 2016

*Spirit of the Games:  
Medals Chased,  
Mettle Shown*

25

AUGUST 15, 2016 | SI.COM  
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## LET IT FLY

*Big Arm? ✓ Big Mouth? ✓  
One Way or Another,  
You Will Pay Attention to  
UCLA's Josh Rosen*

By **PETE THAMEL**

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### The Playoff

1 ALABAMA

2 CLEMSON

3 FLORIDA ST.

4 MICHIGAN



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# LINEUP

8.15.2016  
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Rio2016

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The Face in the Crowd who never was

## SI HAS REGIONAL COVERS THIS WEEK:

Leon Halip/Getty Images (Peppers); Robert Beck (Rosen); Bill Frakes (Deshaun Watson); Greg Nelson (Ward Jr.)

Photograph by Leon Halip/Getty Images

# Sports Illustrated





**LUKE WALTON** The 36-year-old Lakers coach and former Warriors assistant discusses his expectations for his new team, plans for beating Golden State and whether Kevin Durant made the right decision.

**MAGGIE GRAY:** Have you told your players what you expect the identity of this team to be?

**LUKE WALTON:** I've reached out to everyone and talked to them individually, letting them know that from the way we work out to the way we do drills, it's going to be a competitive environment here. We want guys to get after each other, and we expect guys to challenge

each other. It's up to our coaching staff to provide that foundation.

**MG:** As an opposing coach, how do you try to stop the new super team, the Golden State juggernaut?

**LW:** [Laughs.] I don't know. I'll wait and see what some of the other teams do. It's a copycat league, so we'll see what kind of success [coach Gregg] Popovich and San Antonio have with them. For now

*"I'm all for players going wherever they feel is best for them."*

—Luke Walton

I guess we just hope they miss their shots.

**MG:** Were you surprised when KD signed with the Warriors?

**LW:** Yeah, I was a little surprised. I'm all for players going wherever they feel is best for them. In the business world and in the coaching world people are always taking better positions elsewhere, but when a player does it, people burn their jerseys or act like they hate the person. I was just surprised, because [the Thunder] really had us on the ropes [in the Western Conference finals]. That was a series that they probably should have won, being up 3-1. They were beating up on us, so I felt like when you get that close to getting to the Finals, that would be motivation to stay. □

For more of Walton's interview, plus the SI Now archives, go to **SI.com/sinow**

## TUNE IN



▶ **EPISODE: AUG. 2**

SI senior editor Ted Keith and writer Jay Jaffe discuss the biggest losers from the MLB trade deadline



▶ **EPISODE: AUG. 3**

Lindsay Davenport describes how tennis has changed since she won gold at the 1996 Olympics



▶ **EPISODE: AUG. 4**

Giants catcher Buster Posey explains his reservations for stiffer penalties for PED use



▶ **EPISODE: AUG. 5**

Hall of Fame wide receiver Art Monk tells why he thinks Terrell Owens may not make it to Canton



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of  
3



**Leading  
Off**

**Rio 2016**

## Around The Rings

*Scenes from  
Rio's opening  
weekend*

Aug. 7  
**RIO OLYMPIC  
ARENA**

*Simone Biles  
flipped on the beam  
during women's  
gymnastics  
qualifications.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROBERT BECK

2016 









2

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2  
3



**Leading  
Off**

## Rio 2016

### Around The Rings

1. Aug. 6  
**GRUMARI**

*Cyclists pedaled along the Atlantic coast in western Rio during the men's road race.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
BOB MARTIN

2. Aug. 8  
**LAGOA STADIUM**

*Rowers in the women's eights competed on the Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon west of Copacabana.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
SIMON BRUTY

3. Aug. 6  
**COPACABANA  
BEACH**

*Teams from Russia and the Netherlands played in the sunset during the men's beach volleyball competition.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
SIMON BRUTY



3









+

33



**Leading  
Off**

**Rio 2016**

## Around The Rings

Aug. 7  
**OLYMPIC  
AQUATICS  
STADIUM**

*Katie Ledecky  
(top) blazed to a  
gold medal (and  
world record) in the  
women's 400-meter  
freestyle.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
DONALD MIRALLE



# INBOX

FOR JULY 25-AUG. 1, 2016



Maybe it was the Russian doping scandal or Brazil's massive spending on the Games despite its struggles to provide even basic services to its people, but I had been feeling a little jaded about Rio. Then I read S.L. Price's story on the **Refugee Olympic team** (*The Longest Run*), and everything right and important and noble about the Olympics snapped back into view. Thanks for the reminder of what they're all about.

David Skena, Orlando



Years ago I read and thoroughly enjoyed Daniel Brown's *The Boys in the Boat*. Now, after reading Richard O'Brien's article on the **U.S. women's eight crew** (*The Unbeatables*), I wonder if it is time for *The Girls in the Boat*.

Richard P. Neilson, Glen Cove, N.Y.

Michael Bamberger's piece on the British Open (**LEADING OFF**) was the best golf writing since Dan Jenkins's story about Arnold Palmer's come-from-behind win at the 1960 U.S. Open at Cherry Hills (*SI*, June 19, 1978).

Bamberger's prose matched the quality of play and sportsmanship we witnessed between **Phil Mickelson** and **Henrik Stenson** at Royal Troon.

Jeff Sholian, Portland



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COVER

Congratulations on a superb **Olympic Preview**. As our country is rocked by shootings, protests and general political discord, it's gratifying to see male and female, black and white, able-bodied and Paralympic athletes representing the U.S. in a positive manner. They make me proud to be an American in 2016.

Robert Gardner  
Mesquite, Nev.



PAGE  
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## POINT AFTER

As a coach and teacher I am always looking for positive examples to shape my students' attitudes, and I've found one in **Steve Gleason**. I cannot fathom what it must have been like to have his physical gifts, central to his success as an NFL safety, taken away by ALS. As Gleason enters the next chapter of his life, it's clear that what really sets him apart is a superior spirit.

Will Raham  
Oakville, Ont.

JIRO OSE (REFUGEES); ON THE COVER: MICHAEL J. LEBRECHT II (OURANT); AL TELLEMAN (LEDECKY); SIMON BRUTY (BILES); FELIX EATON; ROBERT BECK (PHELPS); BEN VAN HOOK (MORGAN); COURTESY OF TEAM GLEASON (GLEASON); KOJIRO KINNO (BRITISH OPEN); DREW GARDNER (CREW)





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## **JENNER: 40 YEARS AFTER GOLD**

In 1976, Bruce Jenner won gold in the Olympic decathlon. Today, Caitlyn Jenner reflects on the person that was living inside her that she had never really dealt with.



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Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH

# SCORECARD

## Love and Infamy

The retirement of Alex Rodriguez is cause to assess a player who cherished the game, tarnished it—and has more to offer it

BY TOM VERDUCCI

**LUDWIG TIECK**, who died in 1853, was a poet and an essayist who became a founder of the Romantic movement. He captured the high-minded honor of his times when he said, “He is not dead who departs from life with a high and noble fame; but he is dead, even while living, whose brow is branded with infamy.”

Few brows in baseball were ever branded more with infamy than that of Alex Rodriguez. But far from dead is he. Rodriguez is a brand, more famous for being infamous than for being a baseball player, and he still has something to offer the sport.

It was a tribute to these forgiving times that when the Yankees essentially fired him from his job as a DH—he will be released this Friday after being allowed to play one last home game in front of family and friends—they kept him on

as a special adviser who will serve as a mentor to their minor leaguers.

Even Rodriguez had to shake his head on Sunday when asked how a guy who sued Major League Baseball, the Yankees’ team doctor and the MLB Players Association in 2013 and was thrown out of baseball for all of ’14 could be hired less than three years later by New York as a mentor. So how might he be remembered? “Hopefully as someone who tripped and fell a lot, but someone who kept getting up.”

What kept him going, and what will serve him well in his new duties, is his unquestionable passion for the sport. It’s odd that someone who hurt the institution of baseball as much as he did could love the game of baseball so much. But it’s true with Rodriguez. I was at his locker in Fenway Park’s visiting clubhouse on

July 8, 1994, his first day in the big leagues, and I was struck by the reverence with which the 18-year-old Mariners shortstop spoke about Cal Ripken, about watching Mets games on television as a kid and about baseball history.

One of my favorite stories about A-Rod’s baseball habit goes back to when he and Derek Jeter were young friends playing for different teams. When Rodriguez was in New York, he would hang at Jeter’s apartment after games. One night Rodriguez grabbed the remote and couldn’t find any West Coast action on TV.

“Don’t you have the package?” he asked. Jeter told him no—why would he want to watch games after he just played in one? Rodriguez was incredulous.

Working the back fields at the Yankees’ minor league complex in Tampa, speaking baseball from the heart in both English and Spanish,

is a pure avocation without measurement or scrutiny. It will suit him well.

**RODRIGUEZ WAS** the perfect player for these times, when baseball moved out of the labor wars and into, and slowly out of, the Steroid Era. The game lost some of its soul and much of its national appeal in those years, but it exploded economically. Rodriguez moved the needle, figuratively and literally. He craved, in order, acceptance and fame. Consumers may not have approved of his behavior, but they loved the spectacle. Rodriguez made himself matter—and, by extension, baseball.

Infamy was never a problem for Rodriguez; insecurity was. He said he needed steroids to be the all-time great that he was expected to be after signing a 10-year, \$252 million deal with Texas in December 2000. We know of eight years in the heart of his career with connections to PEDs: 2001, ’02 and ’03 (admitted steroid use); ’07 (therapeutic use exemption for testosterone); ’08 (therapeutic use exemption for clomiphene citrate); and ’10, ’11 and ’12 (received PEDs from his drug supplier in South Florida, Anthony Bosch). Rodriguez also confirmed being treated in ’09 by Anthony Galea—a Canadian doctor who pleaded guilty to bringing mislabeled drugs into the U.S.—but not with banned





not at the risk of perjury. He did his time—a year out of baseball, immunity from the feds—and came back in 2015.

**FREED FROM** expectations and rested from a year off, Rodriguez hit .282 with 24 homers in the first four months of the season. But without Bosch, his body withered as the season wore on. He hit .191 after July 31.

The snap in his swing never came back. Watching him this year was painful. He couldn't elevate the ball, couldn't generate the ferocious backspin on his towering drives that helped him launch 696 home runs. He would hit ground balls in batting practice. He batted .197 over a calendar year.

Turning 41 last month, Rodriguez reached his physical limit. The Yankees could see it better than he could. They had to make way for young legs such as catcher Gary Sanchez, 23, and outfielder Aaron Judge, 24, to get at bats. Principal owner Hal Steinbrenner handed Rodriguez a graceful exit strategy.

Centuries ago, *infamy* derived from Latin to define the opposite of fame, to capture a public dishonor that even leaned toward evil. Time and culture have softened the edge of the sword. Rodriguez, in his own way, left an indelible mark on baseball. His playing days behind him, now he has a chance to leave a better one. □

substances. Is it possible that he never played a day clean in the big leagues? Even Rodriguez, back in '09, recognized the opening he gave people to doubt it all.

"There will be some people that say, you know, 'Alex is not a great player, going back to high school,'" he said. "I mean, they're just going to have this blanket cloud over my career. And for those, they may have their own point."

Rodriguez won his only

world championship that year. The next season, having just turned 35, unhappy about gaining weight and lacking energy, he turned to Bosch.

The doping went on for three years, a staggering array of drugs administered morning, noon and night by multiple delivery systems, such as lozenges, creams and injections. During the 2012 American League Championship Series, a struggling Rodriguez

reportedly called Bosch and told him to meet him in Detroit and to bring his needles and potions. When a federal arbitrator reduced his suspension from 211 games to 162 in January 2014, Rodriguez declared, "I have been clear that I did not use performance enhancing substances . . . and in order to prove it I will take this fight to federal court."

Of course, he couldn't make good on his threat,



## The Case for . . . A-Rod, Legend

BY JOE SHEEHAN

**THERE ARE ANY** number of strands to the Alex Rodriguez story, but let's start here: He was, at minimum, one of the 15 best players in baseball history. The No. 1 overall pick by the Mariners in 1993, he reached the majors one year later at age 18, was a superstar at 20, the best player on a playoff team at 24 and later a three-time AL MVP over a five-year period. Rodriguez announced his retirement on Sunday while sitting on 3,114 hits and 696 home runs; just one person in baseball history, Hank Aaron, has more of both. A-Rod ranks 16th all time in Wins Above Replacement, with many of the players above him having starred a century or more ago.

Rodriguez was a postseason hero who was never regarded as such; he batted .340 with three home runs in five postseason series for Seattle. In his first taste of the postseason in New York, in 2004, he hit .320 with three homers. A brutal finish to the '04 ALCS and a three-series stretch from '05 through '07—a total of 61 at bats in which he had nine hits as the Yankees lost four consecutive series—gave him a reputation as a choker that was wholly unearned. He almost single-handedly carried New York to its '09 championship, batting .365 with six home runs and 18 RBIs in 15 games. For his career Rodriguez batted .259/.365/.457 in 76 postseason games and had a .973 OPS in his lone World Series. The only way to think of him as a choker is to

carve out slices of his October résumé in which he didn't hit well while ignoring the ones in which he did.

With Rodriguez's retirement an era has ended. The first star to be suspended for a failed PED test was then Oriole Rafael Palmeiro in 2005. Palmeiro was a member of the 3,000-hit/500-homer club that Rodriguez would later join, and, just as his former Rangers teammate would be when dealing with his own PED transgressions, he was vilified. Over the ensuing decade baseball has seen many of its signature superstars either admit to drug use, like Mark McGwire, or have seen their records and reputations tarnished by substantive allegations of it, like Barry Bonds. Some, like Palmeiro and

Manny Ramirez, have been caught by the testing program. Others, like Rodriguez's former Yankees teammates Jason Giambi and Andy Pettitte, seem to have had their admitted use—of steroids and HGH by the former and HGH by the latter—glossed over. Rodriguez's retirement, however, feels like the last time in which tearing down a great player—by the media, by the fans, by the league itself—was a primary goal of the baseball world.

For some, two paragraphs of Rodriguez's numbers won't matter. "Cheater!," they'll cry, minimizing his accomplishments due to his confessions of drug use. Perhaps they're right to decide that Rodriguez is somehow different from generations of players who chased every edge before we cared how they did it. Perhaps they're right to dismiss Rodriguez's career in the same week that Ken Caminiti—whose steroids admission in 2002 helped expose baseball's PED problem—is posthumously inducted into the Padres Hall of Fame, and when Dee Gordon, who served an 80-game suspension this year, pushes the Marlins toward a playoff spot. Perhaps they're right to ignore the specifics of Rodriguez's case, to not ruminate about the issues of promised anonymity or stolen evidence or the financial support of criminals that are all a part of his story.

Where they're wrong is this: You don't find greatness in a pill, or a syringe or a cream. There's never been a substance created that will give you 696 home runs and 3,114 hits. Alex Rodriguez is one of the greatest players who ever lived, and neither the mistakes he made nor our particular generation's obsession with them will change that. □



»  
**You don't  
find  
greatness  
in a pill,  
or a  
syringe  
or a  
cream.  
There's  
never  
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# Glorious Failures

When the best isn't good enough

**JIM FURYK, 46**, made history in the final round of the Travelers Championship at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Conn., by shooting the PGA Tour's first-ever 58. This came three years after Furyk became one of only six players to shoot a 59 on Tour and two weeks after Stephan Jaeger shot a 58 at the Web.com tour's Ellie Mae Classic. The difference? Jaeger won, Furyk didn't. He started the day 16 shots back, at one over, and his 12 under par left him tied for fifth, three shots behind winner Russell Knox. Furyk's is not the only stellar effort to be part of a losing cause.



**Low Man**  
Furyk is the only person to break 60 twice on the PGA Tour.

ATHLETE	DATE	EVENT	RESULT ↓
John Landy	8/7/1954	"Miracle Mile"	Ran his second sub-four-minute time but was passed by Roger Bannister in the stretch
Harvey Haddix	5/26/1959	Pirates vs. Braves	Had a perfect game for 12 innings, but gave up a run in the 13th
Jerry West	5/5/1969	NBA Finals	Averaged 38 points and was named MVP, but the Lakers lost 4-3 to the Celtics
Chuck Howley	1/17/1971	Super Bowl V	Racked up two picks and a fumble recovery to earn the MVP award in a 16-13 loss to the Colts
Michael Jordan	4/20/1986	East quarterfinals	Scored 63 against the Celtics in Game 2, which ended 135-131 Boston in double OT

## Games Change

Who might follow Bob Costas?

**BEFORE THE RIO GAMES**, NBC Sports broadcaster Bob Costas told *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* that he will decide about hosting future Olympics on a "case-by-case basis." Costas, 64, has been the network's primetime Olympics anchor since 1992 but said he does not have a number in mind regarding how many more Games he wants to be in that role. His bosses, however, have started thinking about the post-Costas future. Here are some possible replacements.

—Richard Deitsch

### IN-HOUSE LEADERS

#### Mike Tirico, 49:

Extensive hosting experience (including soccer's World Cup) makes him the odds-on favorite.

#### Rebecca Lowe, 35:

The British import has received universal praise for her preparation and excellence while hosting NBC's Premier League coverage.

#### Matt Lauer, 58:

NBC Olympics execs love all things *Today*, and Lauer filled in ably for Costas in Sochi when the latter had an eye ailment.

### IN-HOUSE LONG SHOTS

#### Lester Holt, 57:

The host of *NBC Nightly News* has a long Olympic bio, including hosting weekday afternoon coverage in Sochi.

#### Meredith Vieira, 62:

Rio was her third time hosting the opening ceremony for NBC, and she's a favorite of executive producer Jim Bell, a former *Today* czar.

#### Liam McHugh, 39:

Well-liked by the brass, he has hosted NBCSN's studio shows for its NHL property.

### WILD CARDS

#### Barack Obama, 55:

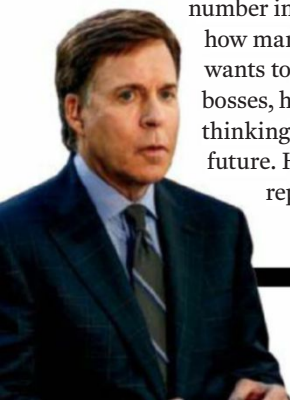
Soon-to-be ex-POTUS loves sports, has a ton of television experience ... and will need a job.

#### Vin Scully, 88:

Giving America's most beloved storytelling broadcaster a global platform would be awesome.

#### Charles Barkley, 53:

He's under contract with Turner through the 2024-25 NBA season, but how entertaining would it be to hear Sir Charles say the IOC is "turrible"?





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## GO FIGURE

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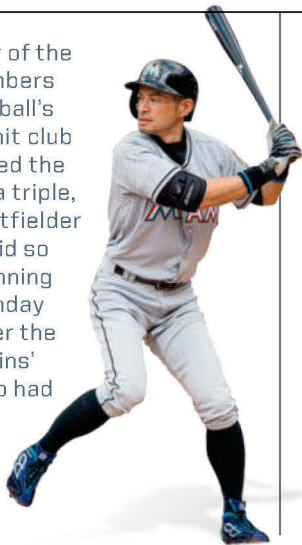
Minutes Argentina's **Juan Martín del Potro** spent trapped in an elevator on Sunday before his Olympic first-round match against Serbia's Novak Djokovic. Del Potro upset the world's No. 1-ranked player 7-6, 7-6.



## SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Florida Gulf Coast beat the Providence Storm 92-89 in an exhibition despite playing the last 40 seconds with only three players.

**2** Number of the 30 members of baseball's 3,000-hit club who have reached the milestone with a triple, after Marlins outfielder **Ichiro Suzuki** did so in the seventh inning in Denver on Sunday in a 10-7 win over the Rockies. The Twins' Paul Molitor also had a three-bagger for his 3,000th, on Sept. 16, 1996, in Kansas City.



\$465,000

Price of a 1979 Wayne Gretzky rookie card sold to an anonymous buyer in Atlantic City, N.J., last Thursday, the most ever paid for a hockey card.



## Brett Favre

He's in the Hall, but his speech ran six minutes long. He still doesn't know when to walk away.



**HOT** ▲  
**NOT** ▼



NBC

The Olympic coverage has been unsatisfying early on. We'll explain why right after this short break...

## THEY SAID IT

**"I'M NOT IN THE CONCEPTION BUSINESS. WE'RE JUST TRYING TO PLAY FOOTBALL."**

**Chip Kelly** // Niners coach, after a reporter noted that there seemed to be a lot of misconceptions about him.





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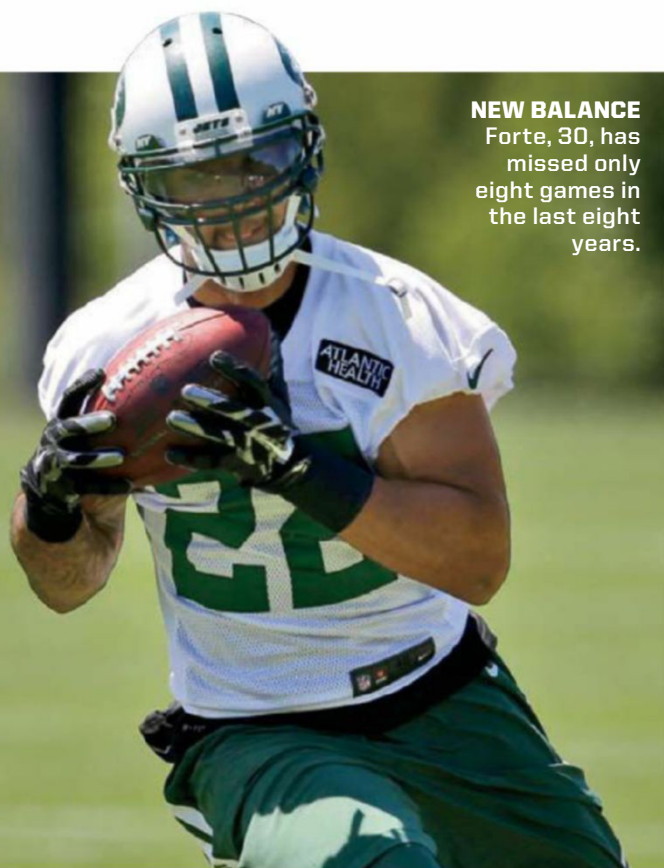
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**NEW BALANCE**  
Forte, 30, has missed only eight games in the last eight years.

## Wrecks And Effects

Life in the NFL fast lane calls for a tune-up man

**WHEN** physical therapist David Reavy watches an NFL game, he sees a series of car crashes. Linemen are like large trucks, linebackers and running backs like sedans, and receivers and cornerbacks are sports cars. Instead of fenders and quarter panels, these on-field “vehicles” have knees, hips and shoulders that get dented and bent on impact. Reavy can attest to the damage: He has put NFL running back Matt

Forte back together time and time again.

“Because of the hits, bones can shift and you can get out of alignment,” says Forte, who signed with the Jets in March after eight seasons with the Bears. Forte, 30, has worked with Reavy since November 2011, and he credits the therapist’s methods—balancing the body through muscle release and activation techniques—for keeping him on the field over the last four years.

In theory, muscles that are weakened or can’t contract efficiently because of tightness or tension need to be “released” through a combination of massage and movement. Meanwhile, muscles that are underdeveloped or

not responding fully when called upon need to be “activated” through targeted exercises.

“When you’re running on a body that is unbalanced, you create a lot of extra force on your joints,” says Reavy. “Matt was having knee pain because his pelvis was out of alignment, so we rebalanced the body by releasing certain muscles and activating others.”

Though he missed the first weeks of Jets camp with a hamstring injury, Forte is confident that his comprehensive off-season body-maintenance regimen will help him get back on the field for the start of the season. “In the last eight years I’ve only missed eight games,” points out Forte. “As a running back, that’s kind of uncommon.”

During the off-season Forte focused on flexibility (stretching and Pilates), strength (upper- and lower-body lifts) and speed work (ladder drills, sprints and route running), in addition to once-a-week sessions with Reavy and with a massage therapist.

Since 2008, Forte leads the NFL in all-purpose yards (12,718), but many NFL teams are wary of running backs over

30 because of all the bumps they’ve taken. “I don’t care about age; it’s really about how you feel and how you take care of your body,” says Forte. “This is just another obstacle for me to conquer.”

—*Jamie Lisanti*



EDGE

Presented by *edge*

Forte’s sessions are catered to his specific ailments, but Reavy says that adding these exercises to any recovery routine can help with alignment and overall body function.



### Hip flexor release

Lie on your stomach and place a lacrosse ball where the top of your femur meets your hip. Lean a tolerable amount of weight onto the ball and roll forward and back. Bend the knee on the side of the ball and swing that ankle side to side. Repeat for 30 seconds to two minutes.



### Adductor release

Sit on a stable surface with one leg out and that foot braced against the opposite knee. Place your elbow (or the back of your forearm) in a sore spot and move your leg up and down. Perform on each leg for three to five minutes.

For more athlete training profiles and tips, go to [SI.com/edge](http://SI.com/edge)





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## UPDATE

## Liquid Gold

**Much** has been made of swimmer Michael Phelps's triumphant return to Olympic competition at the Rio Games, but it was 19-year-old **FACES IN THE CROWD** alum Caeleb Dressel (Jan. 14, 2013), making his Olympic debut, who kicked off the gold-medal-winning 4 × 100-meter freestyle relay that gave Phelps his record 19th Olympic gold on Sunday. Dressel led off with a personal-best 48.10 seconds and Phelps swam the next leg to give the U.S. a lead it never surrendered in defeating defending champion France by .61 of a second. Dressel, a junior at Florida who set all-time records in the 50- and 100-yard free at the 2016 NCAA championships, let his emotion show on the podium. "I tried to tell myself I wasn't going to cry. I was too tired to cry. But as soon as I heard that national anthem play, the tears rolled down my face," he told *USA Today*. "I just couldn't hold back." —A.F.

**Imagine Patterson** | *Summerville, S.C.* | *Track and Field*

Imagine, a junior at Summerville High, won the 17-and-18 age group 400-meter hurdles at the Junior Olympics in Sacramento with a personal best 59.16. In May she won a second straight South Carolina 4A title with a state-record 1:00.46 and helped the Green Wave take second place in the 4 × 100 and 4 × 400 relays.

**Markelle Fultz** | *Upper Marlboro, Md.* | *Basketball*

Fultz, a 6' 5" point guard and recent graduate of DeMatha Catholic High in Hyattsville, scored a team-high 23 points to lead the U.S. to a 99–84 win over Canada in the final of the FIBA Americas 18-and-under championship in Valdivia, Chile. It was the team's fourth straight gold medal. Fultz will play for Washington this fall.

**Maeve Koscielski** | *Indianapolis* | *Tennis*

Maeve, a junior at Cathedral High, swept Lauren Marx of Mater Dei High [Evansville] for the Indiana title. Playing No. 1 singles a week earlier, Maeve, with her sisters Claire, a sophomore, and Grace, an incoming freshman at Ball State, led the Irish to their first team title since 1986 with a 3–2 win over St. Joseph High [South Bend].

## FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited by ALEXANDRA FENWICK

**William Adams** | *Owego, N.Y.* | *Timber Sports*

Adams, a recent graduate of Paul Smith's College in Paul Smiths, N.Y., won the Stihl collegiate championship in Tinley Park, Ill., by two points. He finished second in two of the four events, the standing block chop and the underhand chop. A four-year member of the Bobcats woodsmen team, Adams earned a spot on the U.S. rookie team at worlds.

**Julianne Alvarez** | *Wellington, New Zealand* | *Golf*

Alvarez, a sophomore at Washington, came back from a bogey that sent her match to extra holes and made two sudden-death par saves to defeat Stanford's Lauren Kim 1 up, delivering the Division I title to the Huskies 3–2. It was the program's first national championship. Alvarez finished the season with a 75.87 stroke average.

**Colin Duffy** | *Broomfield, Colo.* | *Sport Climbing*

Colin, a seventh-grader at Stargate School [Thornton] who competes for Boulder-based Team ABC, won his fourth straight youth nationals title, in Kennesaw, Ga. He had the highest score over four rounds in the Youth C category for ages 11 to 13 and also won the male youth all-around award for outstanding performance through the 2015–16 season.

Nominate Now ▼



GUEST SHOTS  
SAY WHAT?

Cardinals  
WR **Larry  
Fitzgerald**  
told

me that a big challenge during the off-season is maintaining healthy eating habits. "When you have kids, there's a lots of snacks around the house," said Fitzgerald, who has two sons, Devin and Apollo. "Then you mess around and eat their Golden Grahams late at night."...

I asked **Pete Rose** if he ever wrote a Hall



of Fame  
speech.  
"I've never  
written a

speech of any kind," Rose said. "I can't read off a piece of paper because I'm embarrassed to put on my glasses, and if I don't, I can't see the piece of paper."...

Former pitcher **Rick Sutcliffe** told me that the late Cubs broadcaster Harry Caray could sometimes be detrimental to the



team's  
health:  
"We  
called it

the Harry Caray Flu. You go out with him the night before, you wake up feeling like crap."



## JUST MY TYPE

→ Interview by **DAN PATRICK**

**DAN PATRICK:** *What kind of interest are you getting from teams [for this season]?*

**MICHAEL VICK:** We got a couple of phone calls. I won't say it's as many phones calls as I'd like, but I understand the dynamic. I'm 36 years old. The thing is, I still have a lot in the tank. You know, I go work out, I still throw, still feel good. I ended last year inactive, and that's not me. I'm truly better than that. I know I can still win football games.

**DP:** *Can you still run a sub-4.5 40-yard dash?*

**MV:** I'd say about a 4.5, a legit 4.5. And you know with a legit 4.5 that's enough escapability, so you're doing pretty well.

**DP:** *What if you had a pro day to show teams what you can do?*

**MV:** If I had a pro day I would light it up. I mean, I work out and I look good in my training. But do I want to run the 40 again? No.

**DP:** *You gotta run the 40.*

**MV:** Your hamstrings are at risk, and I haven't had the best history with my hamstrings. [Laughs.]

**DP:** *Which current QBs could outrun you?*

**MV:** In terms of long speed, there are a couple of them who could do it. [Colin] Kaepernick seems like he moves the fastest. I've

never really seen Russell [Wilson]'s straight-line speed. I know he's got escapability, but I would have to go with Kaepernick.

**DP:** *Could you run backward and beat Ben Roethlisberger if he's running forward?*

**MV:** [Laughs.] Ben's going to get offended by this, but yes. If you ask Ben, he'll tell you he's a great athlete, which he is. But running backward, I still might get him. You know running, that's

not Ben's forte. Ben's movement in the pocket laterally is what makes him special, but he's not going to beat anybody in the 40.

**DP:** *Did coaches ever discourage you from running?*

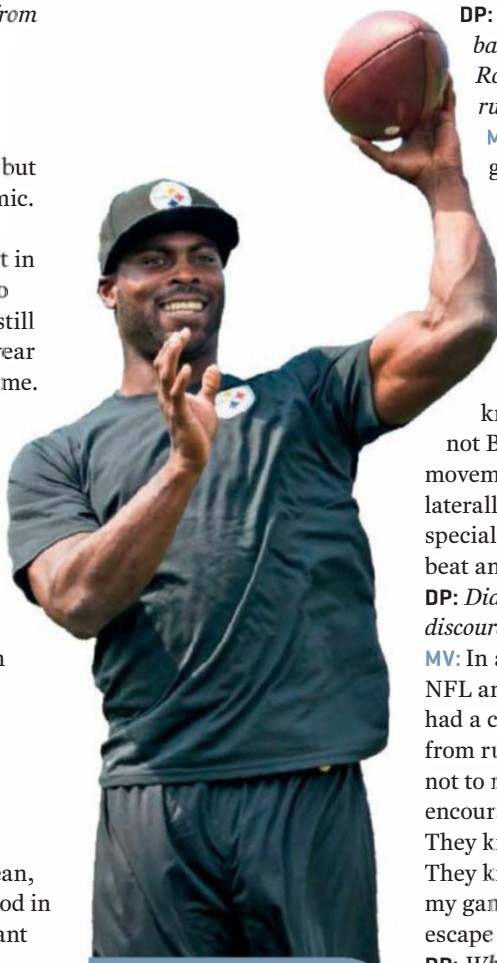
**MV:** In all of my years in the NFL and college, I never had a coach discourage me from running or tell me not to run. They've always encouraged me to do it. They knew it was a gift. They knew it was a part of my game. It was a way to escape and not to get hit.

**DP:** *What do people say to you on the street?*

**MV:** It's all love when I'm out on the street. Some people think that everybody's not on your team [when you make a mistake], but I beg to differ.

**DP:** *Are you allowed to have a dog now?*

**MV:** Yeah, I'm allowed to do anything I want to do now, as long as it's not illegal. □



MICHAEL VICK

## END RUN?

The 13-year veteran quarterback, who started three games for the Steelers in 2015 before being sidelined with an injured hamstring, believes he still has the speed and skill to play one final season at age 36.





DAVID ROBINSON

# REAL POSSIBILITIES

How much higher can basketball's favorite 7-foot-1 MVP, 10-time All-Star, gold medalist and Hall of Famer possibly reach? Here's how he reimagined his life's mission.

## ALWAYS A TEAM PLAYER

Before so famously (and brilliantly) playing center for San Antonio, David Robinson served as a naval officer, earning him the nickname, "The Admiral." As much as he's respected as a leader, he respects the power of teamwork. "I've been fortunate enough to be a part of some great teams," Robinson says. "I've gotten a chance to learn a lot not only about myself, but about how things should work."

## PIVOTING AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME

"I started up Carver Academy before I retired," Robinson says of the private nonprofit (now public charter) school he founded in 2001 to provide opportunities for inner-city children in San Antonio.

"So I knew that it was going to be one of my pursuits. But in the nonprofit world, I was a neophyte. It's a little scary starting over," he admits.

What inspired him, at the height of his career, to start a school? "San Antonio has been a phenomenal place for our family," he explains. "I wanted to do something to help a traditionally underserved part of town. Building a school was a natural fit for me because I'm a teacher at heart." Not knowing how to start a school from scratch, Robinson sought out mentors. "I went to the best school administrators I knew for advice."

He admits he was out of his depth, but passionate about his goals. "The idea of seeing these little kids' eyes open up and realizing new possibilities," he explains, "that's where I thought we could have a long-term impact in the city."

## REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Fifteen years later, the results speak for themselves. "We've grown to over 3,500 students in the city. We have 12 schools. We're opening up two to three new schools every year. In 2017, we'll have 20 schools here in San Antonio—and eventually over 10,000 students. And every single one of our students goes to college," he says. Robinson credits a good deal of this success to his founding of the Admiral Capital Group, an investment firm that helped him attract like-minded partners to invest and raise funds. "I've had to flip my brain on a different axis now," Robinson adds. "Now I'm thinking from a business perspective."

"The quickest way to age is to shut down. Reinventing yourself is not only fun, it's critical," he says, citing an inspiring icon. "George Washington Carver, whom the school is named after, was a perfect example. He said, 'Start where you are, use what you have, make something of it, and never be satisfied.' Keep pressing. Because there's always something more to do."

“  
I'm a teacher  
at heart ...  
and learning  
is a lifelong  
journey.”

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*The Games Open*

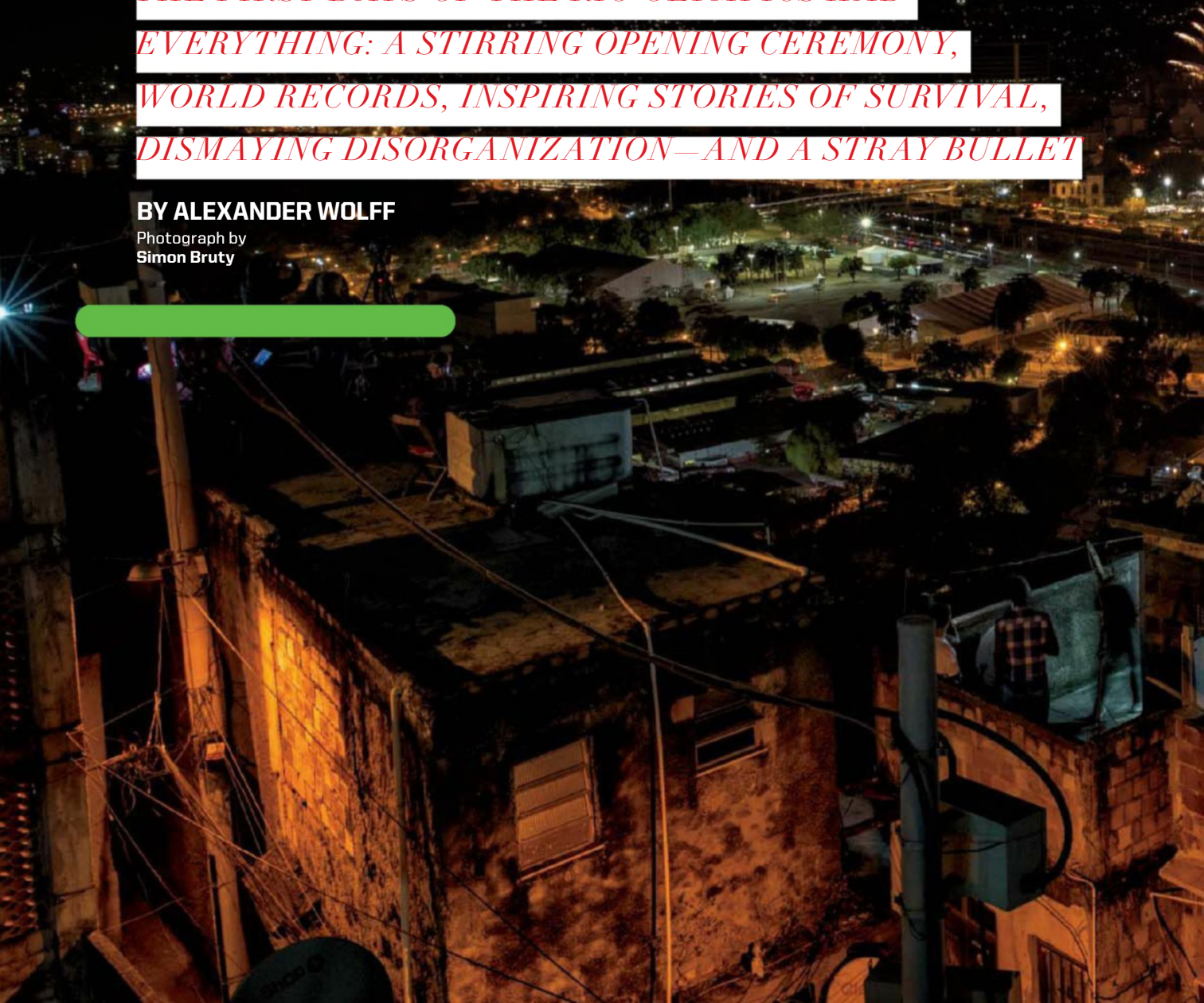


# *In with*

*THE FIRST DAYS OF THE RIO OLYMPICS HAD  
EVERYTHING: A STIRRING OPENING CEREMONY,  
WORLD RECORDS, INSPIRING STORIES OF SURVIVAL,  
DISMAYING DISORGANIZATION—AND A STRAY BULLET*

**BY ALEXANDER WOLFF**

Photograph by  
**Simon Bruty**





# *a Bang*



## **FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS**

*Seen from the rooftops of the Mangueira favela, the opening ceremony fireworks seemed to set Maracanã ablaze.*





# W

**WHEN THEY** came upon it on New Year's Day, 1502, Portuguese explorers thought the spot we now call Rio de Janeiro sat at the mouth of a river. It turned out to be the mouth of a bay, but they named the settlement after a river anyway, as if to mark a warning for future generations: Things here might not be what they seem.

It's a worthy caveat for these Rio Olympics, which after a halting run-up are proving to be a Games of work-arounds, split differences, and baits and switches. If Rio 2016 eventually becomes the party that organizers promised, it'll do so despite the stones thrown in protest by unpaid teachers as the Olympic torch arrived in the city. Last Saturday organizers pledged changes to security protocols so spectators would no longer miss parts of events because of lengthy lines. Then there was the ultimate fix, resorted to by firefighters at the Olympic Stadium before

a women's soccer match between Sweden and South Africa: using bolt cutters to open a gate when no one could find the key.

The bravado of "zero tolerance" for doping gave way to an expediency that allowed about two-thirds of the athletes in the tainted Russian delegation to compete yet sidelined Yuliya Stepanova, the whistleblowing runner who helped expose Moscow's state-run doping regime. The corpse of a man shot by a policeman who said he had been assaulting people lay outside Maracanã Stadium as spectators left Friday night's opening ceremony. The next day a bullet—possibly fired by drug traffickers trying to down a security balloon, according to Brazil's defense minister—ripped through the roof of the media center at the equestrian venue in Deodoro. It might be arrogant for a country in crisis to spend \$12 billion on an Olympics, but it's no less so to stage them in a city where more than 1,000 people died of gunfire last year and not expect bullets to be part of the proceedings.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach tried to turn all the disquieting developments on their heads. He called Brazil's troubles—political instability, a cratering economy, the Zika virus, a spike in urban crime—the ultimate "stress test." Simply by hosting the Games, he said, Rio organizers had proved that





The Games Open

**Rio2016**



## BRILLIANT STROKES

*After Mangureira residents (right) watched Lima light the torch (below), Mardini won a race on behalf of all refugees—and the Olympic ideal.*

the Olympic movement is “robust.” Bach might have chosen an analogy other than *stress test*, given that members of the Australian delegation had conducted one on their accommodations in the athletes’ village, simultaneously flushing toilets and switching lights on and off only to see water rush down walls and wiring short out. This so concerned the IOC president that upon his arrival from Europe, he rushed to the village “unshaven,” in his word, thereby revealing himself to be a first responder of the highest order.

Certainly there were no complaints from the 10 members of the first Refugee Olympic Team, Bach’s greatest achievement in office. They include judoka Yolande Mabika, 28, who has



become a bottle blonde since fleeing the Democratic Republic of Congo for Brazil, embracing, as she puts it, “everything new—a new story, a new home, a new place, including the color of my hair.” Swimmer Yusra Mardini, who escaped from Syria to Greece through Turkey, swam with two others for more than three hours through the Aegean Sea, tugging their swamped and sinking dinghy to shore after it became disabled with 20 passengers aboard. On Saturday, with noise from the Maracanã celebration still rattling around her 18-year-old head, Mardini won her heat in the 100-meter butterfly in her first race as an Olympian.

The opening ceremony of the first Olympics to be held in South America offered pointed messages for both the U.S., home of Donald Trump, and Western Europe and its Brexit-inflamed fevers. Trump “will hate the ceremony,” its creative director, Fernando Meirelles, tweeted a few hours before his passion play about the dignity of immigrants and the threat of global warming. The show was suitably low-tech and low-budget for a country in crisis—a virtue, insisted Meirelles’s collaborator Daniela Thomas, who called her team’s ability to improvise “MacGyverism.” Organizers felt no need to have an archer light the cauldron with an arrow or parachutists float into the stadium when each athlete could simply plant a seed in a cartridge of soil for the Athletes’ Forest that will grow in the Olympic BMX park in Deodoro, in the northwest section of the city. The ultimate MacGyver move was conscripting Vanderlei de Lima, Brazil’s 2004 marathon medalist in Athens, only hours before showtime to light the cauldron when it emerged that Pelé, for hazy reasons, couldn’t make it.

Amid the samba and bossa nova and *baile funk*, the ceremony



struck a couple of dissonant notes. It was jarring to see pollution decried and Rio's shantytowns glorified when these Olympics have been responsible for so much environmental degradation and the displacement of so many *favelados*. And while planting trees can sequester more carbon, Brazil's political crisis began with bribes involving the oil giant Petrobras.

But it's surely worth appealing to a billion TV viewers worldwide to give sanctuary to 60 million of their fellow earthlings and to save the planet they share. And to do so with refugee athletes, including one who during this Olympic cycle had actually swum for her life, gave the exercise an If-a-butterfly-flaps-her-wings credibility. Mardini, who wouldn't qualify for the semifinals, won that heat because she had trained seriously in prewar Damascus and because those desperate hours wrestling that dinghy to shore strengthened her muscles and her will. She finished first because she showed up at a swim club in Berlin without a suit or a cap and said, "Hey, I'm a swimmer, can you help me out?" And someone did.

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics an Asian journalist asked U.S. basketball Dream Teamer Karl Malone why some baskets are worth three points and others only two. There was a whiff of condescension to the Mailman's reply: "That's just the way we do it, my man." But Malone conveyed solidarity with his naive interlocutor, and that comment has worn well over the years. The Olympics offer up enough such holy moments to rebuke the "wristband, my man" exclusion in the world today, which Paul Simon put into song and Meirelles, Thomas and their team put into pageantry.

For better or worse, Rio welcomed to its Games the Family of My Man, which in this quadrennium includes not only refugees but also soldiers, police officers, epidemiologists, eco-boat skippers, lab techs and bomb squadders to go with the usual athletes, coaches and spectators. That list tells you today's world isn't the optimistic one of 1992, when the Cold War had ended and a rosy tomorrow seemed possible. But that doesn't mean you don't fight the good fight for peace. Every Games has a chance to redeem the Olympics, however briefly—even this one, what with Yusra Mardini and her refugee teammates washing up at the mouth of the River of January, to remind us that My Man is Your Man is Our Man, even if it doesn't always seem so. □





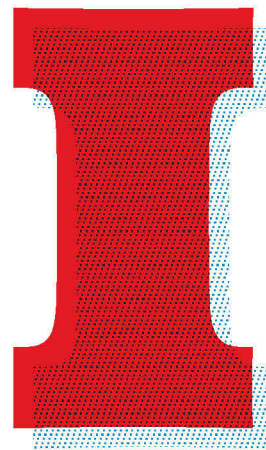


# Engendering Debate

*CASTER SEMENYA SHOULD DOMINATE THE 800 METERS IN RIO, BUT ISSUES RAISED BY HER PARTICIPATION WILL BE DISCUSSED LONG AFTER THE RACE ENDS*

BY TIM LAYDEN

Photograph by  
Bill Frakes



**IT IS LIKELY** that on the night of Saturday, Aug. 20, in the Olympic Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, a 25-year-old South African woman named Caster Semenya will win a gold medal. Her victory will come in the 800 meters, a race in which her times have been approaching a decades-old world record thought by many in the sport to be unapproachable. Her performance will be stunning: She is 5' 10" and weighs 161 pounds, with muscular arms, broad shoulders and narrow hips.

She has a severe jawline, hard and strong, and a competitor's unflinching eyes. In a 2009 article, Ariel Levy of *The New Yorker* described Semenya as "breathtakingly butch."

This is not Semenya's first appearance on the global stage; she has been a world-class runner for eight years and won a silver medal in the 800 in London. But now she is dominant, and the alleged—but unverified—source of that dominance has made her one of the most significant and potentially transformative athletes in Olympic history. Her races in Rio will trigger an emotional debate on gender and sports, one that is far



more challenging than the comparatively simple issue of doping.

“She looks the way she looks, and then she runs away from the field,” says Joanna Harper, a medical physicist in Portland and the first transgender woman to consult with the International Olympic Committee on gender and sports. “And then, yeah, all hell breaks loose.”

The crux of the Semenya controversy is the belief of many athletes, medical experts and sports journalists that Semenya has an intersex condition, in which a person has anatomical sex characteristics of both males and females. That causes her to be hyperandrogenous—her body produces much higher levels of testosterone than most other females. And that in turn builds greater muscle mass and allows her to run faster. Semenya, whose supposed advantages have been debated in the track underground since she won the 800 meters at the world championships as an 18-year-old in 2009, has never publicly confirmed any of this, and declined to comment to *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* this week. In 2009 she told the South African magazine *You*: “I see it all as a joke, it doesn’t upset me. God made me the way I am and I accept myself. I am who I am and I’m proud of myself.”

The assumptions of journalists and competitors about Semenya stem from connecting a series of dots, from her precocious dominance to media reports about her medical records to peaks and valleys in her race times that have coincided with changes in track gender rules. Last year the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) suspended a rule by the IAAF, track’s governing body, that placed a ceiling on testosterone levels in female athletes. Since then Semenya has been nearly unbeatable, prompting speculation that she had been suppressing her testosterone with medication but is no longer doing so. Semenya hasn’t discussed this publicly either, but in an article posted online by *The Guardian* on July 29, her coach, Jean Verster, said, “Caster does what she needs to do.”

In Monaco last month, at the last major international competition before the Olympics, Semenya pulled away from a strong field over the final 100 meters of the 800. Only 11 women in history have run faster than her winning time of 1:55.33, and only two have done it since 1997. The ease of Semenya’s victories this year and the continuous improvement in her times have prompted speculation that she will threaten the world record of 1:53.28, set 33 years ago by Jarmila Kratochvílová of what was then Czechoslovakia. Although Kratochvílová never tested positive for any PED, many track and field insiders suspect that her record was artificially aided, given the drug-addled era in which it was set. If Semenya were to approach Kratochvílová’s mark in Rio, she would turn the sport on its head.

“I hope she blows away the competition,” wrote U.S. 800-meter runner Phoebe Wright, who is not a member of the U.S. Olympic team but has run against Semenya, in an email to *SI*. “One, I want to see how fast she can run. But also, I want the world to see how much of an advantage she has.”



## MAKING HER MARK

*Semenya’s silver in London (above) may become gold, but it was her race in Monaco in July (opposite) that has the track world buzzing.*

The Semenya story dovetails with evolving definitions of sex and gender outside of sports. According to Harper, 60 million people are either transgender or intersex and “don’t fit easily into our notion of male and female.” They have made slow, hard-earned progress in society, largely through grudging acceptance of self-defined gender identity (Caitlyn Jenner’s, for instance). But that battle is far more complex in sports, where women’s victories depend on clear boundaries between male and female. When those boundaries are blurred, intersex (and, potentially, transgender) athletes classified as female might dominate.

“We separate men and women into categories because we want women to be able to win some competitions,” says Eric Vilain, a





*"I WANT TO SEE HOW FAST SHE CAN RUN," SAYS WRIGHT. "BUT ALSO, I WANT THE WORLD TO SEE HOW MUCH OF AN ADVANTAGE SHE HAS."*

professor of human genetics at UCLA and a consultant to the IOC medical commission. "There is 10 to 12% difference between male and female athletic performance. We need to categorize with criteria that are relevant to performance. It is a very difficult situation with no easy solution."

**T**HE SEMENYA STORY went global in 2009, at the world championships in Berlin. Then 18, she dominated an 800-meter field of more experienced women by running 1:55.45, a South African national record. She spoke to journalists in a deep voice and even then had a muscular build. Twenty-three days later, Mike Hurst of *The Daily Telegraph* of Sydney wrote that the IAAF had subjected Semenya to testing and that she was found to have three times the amount of testosterone that a woman would be expected to have. The IAAF quickly issued a press release confirming only that the "gender verification test results will be examined by a group of medi-

cal experts." The IAAF did not say anything more about Semenya until July 2010, when it issued a 56-word statement clearing her for competition and stating that "the medical details of the case remain confidential and the IAAF will make no further comment on the matter."

Neither Semenya, her coaches nor South African athletic officials have confirmed any of the details reported by *The Daily Telegraph*. Her mother told the BBC in 2009, "Caster is a girl. Her birth certificate says she is a girl." The president of South Africa's athletics federation, Leonard Chuene, resigned over the case, saying, "We are talking about a child here, whose name has been dragged through the dirt by [the IAAF]. If gender tests have to take place, they should have been done quietly. By going public on the tests, the IAAF has let down this young child."

Semenya was raised in a rural village in Limpopo, South Africa's northernmost province. Harper says that intersex conditions are more likely to go unrecognized in people from underdeveloped and rural areas.

Gender determination was first introduced in Olympic track and field in 1948. It consisted of a simple declaration by participating nations that their female athletes were indeed female. (Stella Walsh, who was born in Poland but raised in the U.S., and who won the 100 meters at the '32 Olympics while competing for

Poland, had a very masculine appearance. After Walsh's death in '80, an autopsy showed that she was intersex.) In '68 the IOC instituted chromosome-based gender testing, done by a cheek swab. If a woman did not have two X chromosomes, she was declared ineligible. A chromosome test was discontinued in '99 after criticism that it was too invasive and based on faulty science. After that there was no universal genetic testing, although





**Rio2016***Track and Field*

athletes could be examined if a test was requested, often by competing nations or their representatives but sometimes by governing bodies.

This is how Semenya came to be tested in the summer of 2009, although the identity of the party requesting the test has never been revealed. (There was considerable outrage after Semenya's race in Berlin. Fifth-place finisher Mariya Savinova of Russia memorably said, "Just look at her.") Semenya returned to competition in 2010 but did not run faster than 1:58.16, more than 2.5 seconds off her time at the worlds.

In April 2011 the IAAF introduced what it called "eligibility rules for females with hyperandrogenism." These stated, in part, "A female with hyperandrogenism who is recognised as a female in law shall be eligible to compete in women's competition in athletics provided that she has androgen levels below the male range." The testosterone ceiling was not stated but has been widely reported to be 10 nanomoles per liter. According to Harper and Vilain, the normal range for females is .5 nmol/L to 3 nmol/L. For men, the range is approximately 10 to 30. "The rule allowed for testosterone to be considerably above the normal female range," says Vilain, "so I have always looked at the guidelines as very inclusive."

Under the rules, hyperandrogenous females would have to lower their testosterone levels. The only ways to do this are by taking suppression medication or by surgically removing testes, if they are present. Semenya's career stagnated. In 2011 she finished second at the worlds in 1:56.35—a very fast time but slower than her Berlin finish. In 2012 she won the silver medal at the London Olympics in 1:57.23; the gold medalist was Savinova, who has since been implicated in the Russian doping scandal and may lose the medal. Semenya slowed to a best of 1:58.92 in 2013, and the next year she finished 12th at the storied Bislett Games in Oslo in a dismal 2:03.68. Last summer she failed even to advance to the final of the 800 meters at the worlds in Beijing. It was widely assumed that she was taking hormone suppressants, but she did not confirm it. In *The Guardian*, Verster said Semenya had frequently been injured in the last two years, but he did not deny that she was on hormone suppressants. "People ask me why Caster didn't



run well last year,” said Verster. “We were building nicely but in April she injured her knee and couldn’t train much in May and June. In July we said, Let’s go to Europe and run two races. She surprised herself by qualifying for the world championships in Beijing. She ran 1:59 in the heats but on semifinal day she felt awful because she hadn’t done back-to-back sessions for a long time.”

That same month the CAS ruled in favor of sprinter Dutee Chand of India, who had been barred from competition in 2014 due to testos-



## A MATTER OF RECORD

*Walsh (368, left) raised gender issues, and if Semenya breaks the mark of Kratochvilová (right), it may partly be due to Chand (above).*

terone levels above the established level. The Chand ruling provisionally cleared the way for intersex athletes to compete without testosterone parameters; the IAAF has two years to show why the limit should be restored. Meanwhile Semenya, running during a period of no rules limitations, is unbeaten this year in nine 800-meter finals, and at a meet in South Africa in the spring she won the 400, 800 and 1,500 meters in times that would be competitive in high-level races. If Semenya was, indeed, suddenly freed from drugs to suppress her testosterone, the effect on her sport was even more dramatic than on her times.

“I don’t like the idea of anyone being excluded,” says Wright, the U.S. runner, “but we have to keep our sport fair, which means deciding where

the genetic and performance advantage is too much. It sucks to ask a person to alter herself in order to compete. It’s not Caster’s fault she was born the way she is; some may even consider it a talent. But would you watch the Super Bowl if you knew who was going to win?”

Harper, who testified in the Chand hearing, believes that a ceiling is necessary. “Who are you trying to be fair to?” she says. “Are you trying to be fair to billions of potential female athletes? Or are you trying to be fair to a very small minority of people who live a truly marginalized existence? It’s difficult. In my opinion, the least unfair solution is that if you want to be a female athlete, the key is testosterone. If your testosterone is below certain levels, we’re going to let you compete. As a female.”

Vilain, the UCLA geneticist, sees what he calls a “schizophrenic” conflict between the Chand ruling and the IOC guidelines on *transgender* female—not intersex—athletes, which was rewritten in November to allow an athlete to participate in competition as a female if her testosterone is below 10 nanomoles per liter, same as the old IAAF standard. “The guidelines are very favorable for transgender athletes, and a great advancement,” says Vilain. “But the same rule was struck down for intersex athletes. It’s illogical.”

In the present, the Chand ruling can be seen as a victory for human rights. In the future, it could become a defeat for women’s sports.

Vilain does not expect that the IAAF will succeed in restoring the testosterone ceiling: “CAS wants IAAF to demonstrate the entirety of the difference between male and female athletic performance is androgenous testosterone. That is not going to be proven, because it’s not true. There are other factors. My testosterone level is higher than Jackie Joyner-Kersey’s, but she would defeat me in a race for many other reasons.”

Where, then, does this lead? Perhaps Olympic sports should establish a third gender category: intersex. A more likely possibility, given societal trends: “You put everybody in the same bag, just compete by gender identity,” says Vilain. “Right now the social activists are winning. So you can have Bruce Jenner saying, ‘I’m Caitlyn, and I’m competing as a woman.’ Nations have a huge investment in sports, and they would do this. And that would be a disaster for women’s sports. It would be a sad end to what feminists have wanted for so long.”

So it is that Caster Semenya runs in Rio, racing for a gold medal, a young woman from rural South Africa chasing a record that has stood for decades. It should be the simplest of challenges, yet it is not simple at all. Instead it asks that you decide, in the most fundamental way, who we are as humans. And who we will be.







# MARQUEE MADNESS

After his brilliant performance in the national title game Clemson quarterback Deshaun Watson comes soaring into the new season, but he's got help carrying the sport's banner. This year an abundance of high-profile, high-achieving players are back, and excitement is, well, high

🔹 BY ANDY STAPLES 📷 BY RICHARD SHIRO/AP





Follow us all season

AUGUST 15, 2016  
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**THE LAST TIME** Deshaun Watson held a football in a game, he threw a 24-yard touchdown pass to Clemson tight end Jordan Leggett with 12 seconds left in the national championship. The score gave the Tigers 40 points and capped a stellar night in Glendale, Ariz., for the sophomore quarterback: 478 yards of total offense and four TD tosses. But as the clock wound down, Watson frowned.

One of the most spectacular individual performances in a college football championship game had been booted into the footnotes by a shrewd coaching move. Earlier in the fourth quarter, with the score tied at 24–24, Alabama’s Nick Saban called an onside kick, which worked perfectly and swung the momentum of what had been a back-and-forth game. Watson’s team would lose 45–40, and he would derive zero satisfaction from his personal performance. He took solace in one thought: “You’ll see us in Tampa next year.”

To win this season’s national championship in Raymond James Stadium on Jan. 9, Watson’s Tigers and all the other title seekers must navigate a landscape loaded with star power. Often, a majority of college football’s established names migrate to the NFL at season’s end. The players who suited up in 2015, for instance, accounted for only 6.8% of the balloting points earned in the ’14 Heisman Trophy vote.

The players who are coming back this year, meanwhile, accounted for 60.5% of last season’s Heisman balloting points. Starting with two who made the trip to New York City last December—Watson and junior tailback Christian McCaffrey of Stanford—some of the biggest stars are returning for an encore, although more often than not because they were not yet eligible for the NFL draft. Now older, stronger and no doubt better, they are capable of lifting the season to a new high.

As we count down to Aug. 26, here are the 16 moments we can’t wait to see in ’16.



**1 WHEN WATSON SHIMMIES** out of the clutches of an opposing defender and rolls away, tiptoeing behind the line of scrimmage. Some defensive back will have convinced himself that no quarterback could possibly escape such a sure sack, and he’ll stand bewildered as Watson’s missile sails over his head and into the hands of a receiver running free.

**2 WHEN MCCAFFREY TAKES** a handoff, darts toward the line and pauses to analyze potential openings. The split second the Cardinal’s blockers engage their assigned defenders, he’ll choose a lane and stomp on the gas. No back in the nation goes from zero to end zone as quickly.

**3 WHEN 6’ 1”, 230-POUND** LSU running back **LEONARD FOURNETTE** breaks through the line and stares down a linebacker. Unless that ’backer



has friends nearby, the collision that follows will not be enjoyable. Take it from Florida’s Jarrad Davis: “He’s so mean with the ball in his hands. When I tackle, I’m not just tackling to put you on the ground, I’m tackling so you can feel me. When he runs the ball, it seems like he’s doing the same thing. Just to see that on film and see that on TV is mind-blowing. You’re sitting back and watching greatness.”

**4 WHEN FLORIDA STATE** junior tailback Dalvin Cook—average 2015 touchdown run: 31.6 yards—decides five-yard gains are a waste of time and single-handedly guts a defense by darting past linemen, bursting through the arms of linebackers and stiff-arming DBs en route to the end zone.

**5 WHEN AN OFFENSIVE** tackle kick-slides to cut off the outside rusher and sees Michigan junior Jabrill Peppers rocketing toward the backfield. Before that tackle can ask, “Didn’t they recruit him as a cornerback, and doesn’t he also play tailback?” the Wolverines’ jack-of-all-trades will have the quarterback on the ground.



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7

### THE NAME GAME

Mayfield led the Sooners to 11 wins last year, while Barrett (below) finally has a clear path to stardom in '15.



9

- 6 **WHEN USC JUNIOR** cornerback Adoree' Jackson lines up at receiver and proves a player doesn't have to attend Michigan to handle the kind of workload that won Charles Woodson the 1997 Heisman.
- 7 **WHEN OKLAHOMA JUNIOR** quarterback **BAKER MAYFIELD** gets flushed from the pocket, reverses field and releases a touchdown pass before careening over the sideline.
- 8 **WHEN ALABAMA LINEBACKER** Tim Williams blasts out of his three-point stance. According to Pro Football Focus, Williams averaged a quarterback pressure for every 2.8 snaps he played in 2015. No one got to the QB more efficiently, and the 6' 4", 230-pound Williams is due for a much bigger role as a senior.
- 9 **WHEN J.T. BARRETT**, now a junior and free of Braxton Miller and Cardale Jones, finally takes the field as the unquestioned starter at quarterback for Ohio State.
- 10 **WHEN GOLDEN-ARMED** UCLA sophomore QB Josh Rosen (*page 60*) shows the same moxie on the field that he showed last year when he installed a hot tub in his dorm room.
- 11 **WHEN HOUSTON COACH** Tom Herman (*page 44*) celebrates with Chamillionaire karaoke.
- 12 **WHEN TEXAS A&M** junior defensive end Myles Garrett dips around a tackle, explodes forward, then bull-rushes the tailback before dropping the opposing quarterback.
- 13 **WHEN OLE MISS** quarterback Chad Kelly catches an errant snap and, with two rushers tossing him down, throws up a prayer that bounces off a helmet and into the waiting hands of a receiver for a touchdown. (Hey, it worked against Alabama last year.)
- 14 **WHEN JUNIOR DEFENSIVE** end Derek Barnett, a sack machine, and senior quarterback Joshua Dobbs, a future rocket scientist (no, really, he majors in aerospace engineering), lead the Volunteers through the T at Neyland Stadium to kick off Tennessee's most anticipated season in more than a decade.
- 15 **WHEN MICHIGAN STATE** junior defensive tackle Malik McDowell reminds some poor ballcarrier of precisely how the Spartans have won two of the last three Big Ten titles.
- 16 **WHEN PITTSBURGH SENIOR** tailback James Conner, who practiced this spring despite the port in his chest to facilitate chemotherapy treatments, reaches the end zone for the first time since missing last season with Hodgkin's lymphoma. □

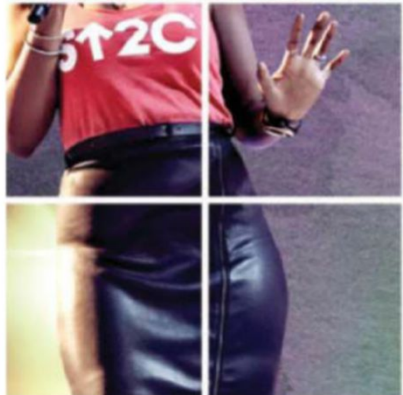


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# WHEN OPPOSITES ATTACK

BY PETE THAMEL | BY KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES

Houston coach Tom Herman and his quarterback, Greg Ward Jr., have overcome serious doubts about each other to run, pass and shout their way into the national title conversation



**ON A SOGGY** April afternoon the soundtrack at Houston's spring practice includes the pounding bass of AC/DC's "Thunderstruck," the rumble of a passing train and the buzz of a drone as it films the session. Over the din, coach Tom Herman screams to senior quarterback Greg Ward Jr. a message that symbolizes the difference between college football's oddest couple: "*I can't HEAR you!*"

Ward is a preacher's son who's so quiet that his high school coaches nicknamed him Lester, after a ventriloquist's dummy. Herman is the once aspiring sports-talk host who runs his program with a shock jock's affinity for attention. When Herman took over in January 2015 and Ward became his quarterback, their success hinged on the flamboyant coach giving the laconic QB, well, a voice. "I didn't know if he had enough presence," Herman says. And Ward's first impression of his coach: "I thought he was insane."

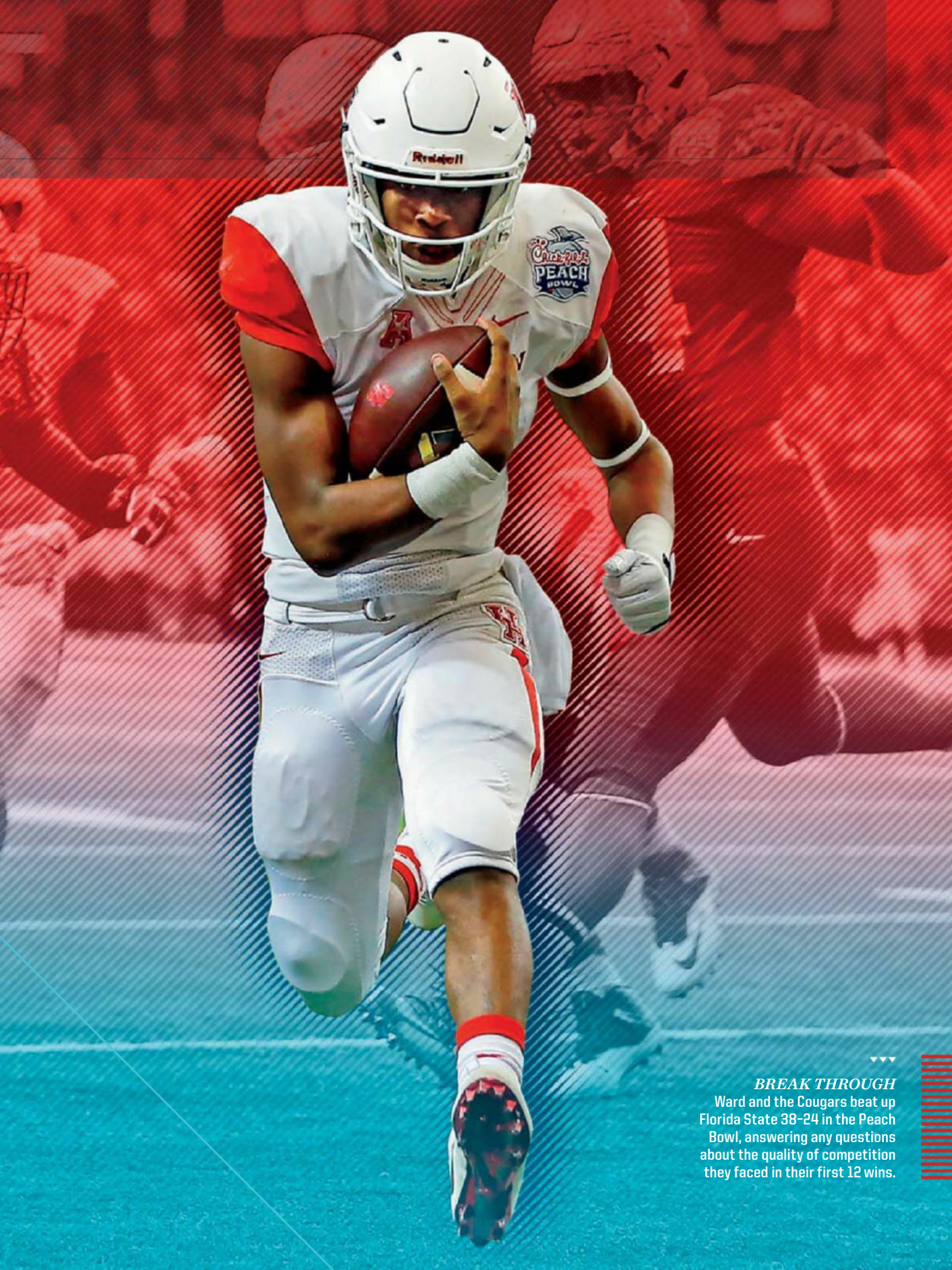
What happened next *was* crazy. The Cougars went 13–1, thumping Florida State 38–24 in the Peach Bowl, and fin-



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▼▼▼  
**BREAK THROUGH**

Ward and the Cougars beat up Florida State 38-24 in the Peach Bowl, answering any questions about the quality of competition they faced in their first 12 wins.







**I NEEDED HIM TO BE A REAL DUDE,” HERMAN SAYS. THAT MEANT THE QB HAD TO BECOME MORE LIKE HIS COACH.**

ished No. 8 in the AP rankings. Ward threw for 2,828 yards, rushed for 1,108, the only quarterback other than Clemson’s Deshaun Watson to surpass the 2,000–1,000 combination last season. Houston’s hyperspeed no-huddle offense averaged 40.4 points, up from 29.8 in 2014, and Herman leveraged that success to juice recruiting (from the 92nd-ranked class in ’15 to No. 35 in ’16) and increase season-ticket sales (now at 22,000, the most in school history by 7,000). By last winter Herman’s name was associated with every big-time coaching vacancy, and Ward had become a Heisman Trophy candidate and a finalist for the Manning Award, for the country’s best quarterback.

It was a stunning ascent for program, coach and player, especially considering that Ward began the 2014 season as a wide receiver. After turning backups J.T. Barrett and Cardale Jones into stars during Ohio State’s ’14 national championship run, Herman, the Buckeyes’ offensive coordinator and QB coach, earned a reputation as a quarterback whisperer. But the turnaround at Houston is the story of how he got the most out of a whispering quarterback.

**L**UNCH IS A brisket sandwich with a side order of *sirs*. “Nice to meet you, sir,” Greg Ward Jr. says as he walks into Stanley’s Famous Pit Bar-B-Q, a no-frills landmark in his cozy east Texas hometown of Tyler.

“It would truly be a blessing, sir,” he says when asked what would it be like to be remembered alongside great Houston quarterbacks such as Andre Ware, David Klingler and Case Keenum.

Do you know your record as a starter? “No, sir, I don’t.” (It’s 19–2.)

In all, he repeats the address 47 times in one day, a rectitude that’s a reflection of his upbringing. His father, Greg Sr., hauls pipe during the week and

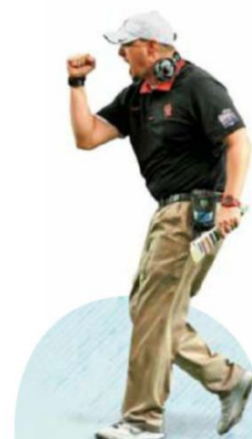


speaks the Word from the pulpit at the Pentecostal Porters Chapel Church of God in Christ on Sundays. His mother, Mary, runs their modest ranch house while teaching her four boys to fear God, respect their elders and treat school as a daily opportunity. “Get the job done,” Greg Sr. told his kids. “You don’t have to be noticed.”

But Greg Jr., the third of the quartet, couldn’t escape attention at John Tyler High, the alma mater of Hall of Fame tailback Earl Campbell. Ward threw for 7,798 yards, 71 touchdowns and only 10 interceptions in his final two seasons, leading his team to Class 4A semifinal appearances in 2011 and ’12.

Lions coach Ricklan Holmes calls Ward’s elusiveness as a runner “a wiggle that you just can’t coach,” but the quarterback’s leadership stood out as much as his moves. During his senior year two teammates got thrown out of a playoff game for fighting. Holmes ordered the culprits to show up on Thanksgiving weekend for a grueling workout that included bar-





**LONE  
STAR**  
Under  
Herman  
(top), Ward  
won the Earl  
Campbell  
Award, given  
to the best  
college  
player  
from or in  
Texas and  
named for a  
fellow John  
Tyler High  
alumnus.

rel rolls, hill sprints and hybrid bear crawls called Lieutenant Dans. Ward showed up to join them.

Ward's only shortcoming was his size: 5' 10" and 165 pounds. Despite his success behind center, recruiting services listed him as an "athlete" or a combination quarterback-receiver, and no Big 12 schools pursued him. His best scholarship offers came from Houston and Memphis, both of which offered a shot to play quarterback but no promises. He chose to stay closer to home.

As a freshman Ward played both QB *and* receiver—sometimes in the same game—throwing 29 passes, catching 10 balls and returning two punts. The next season he started the first five games at receiver, but when John O'Korn proved ineffective calling the signals, Ward took over at quarterback for the final eight games, during which he threw for 2,010 yards and rushed for 573. He admits now that he didn't know how much he didn't know: Standing at the line of scrimmage unable to diagnose a

defense, he took flight at the first sign of pressure.

Despite a 7–5 season, Houston fired coach Tony Levine. Herman took over the day after the Buckeyes won the national championship and immediately changed the tempo on the field and off. His practice mantra is one of constant exhortation—*GO! GO! GO! GO! GO!*—and upon arrival he and offensive coordinator Major Applewhite administered a graduate-level crash course in quarterbacking. Suddenly Ward found himself accountable for every read and check. "Now I can tell how blitzes are coming because of a front or what the safeties are giving me," he says. "I wasn't really dialed in before [Herman and Applewhite] came."

The new staff even took on Ward's diet: He has to email pictures of all his meals to Houston's coaches and nutritionist. (He's up to 5' 11", 188 pounds.)

Herman made the expectations clear: "I needed him to be a real dude." That meant the quarterback had to become more like his coach.





**AN UNDERGRADUATE** at Division III Cal Lutheran in Thousand Oaks, Calif., during the mid-1990s, Tom Herman starred as a wide receiver and did P.A. announcing for other sports. At a baseball game during his senior year he played the chime of a cuckoo clock over the stadium speakers to second-guess an umpire's call. The portly ump pointed at Herman in the bleachers and barked, "One more of those, and you're out of here!"

Herman didn't flinch. "I swear to holy heaven the very next [sound effect] on there was a pig squealing," Herman says, his green eyes twinkling, "and I pressed PLAY." Herman mimics the oinking that blared through the park and cackles at the memory of the ump screaming, "You're out of here!"

That same willingness to create a scene has been evident at Houston. After winning the American Athletic Conference last year, Herman followed through on a bet with his team and got outfitted for a diamond-plated tooth grill by the local rapper Paul Wall. (He paid \$1,000 out of his own pocket.) This spring two graduate assistants dressed as Easter bunnies squared off in the Oklahoma drill at practice. Both moments went viral, a point of pride with Herman, who figures the best way to reach recruits' hearts is through their smartphones.

Herman chose coaching over broadcasting in 1998, when he accepted a gig tutoring the wide receivers at Texas Lutheran for \$5,000 and a meal card. His coaching odyssey before landing at Ohio State in 2012 doubles as a *Lonely Planet* guide to college football have-nots: Texas Lutheran, Sam Houston State, Texas State, Rice and Iowa State. (The notable exception was a graduate assistant job at Texas in '99 and '00.)

Herman's travels taught him that spreading the field and ramping up tempo could compensate for talent gaps. Even more important, he learned the value of instilling passion and camaraderie. At Ohio State he was known for assigning someone to come up with a joke of the day in quarterback meetings to keep everyone engaged. "His gift is his ability to connect with players on a personal level," says Jones, whom Herman coached for three years in Columbus. "There's not a lot of coaches like him."



**ESIDES PICKING UP** the pace, Herman challenged the culture at Houston. He kicked the players out of the locker room because they couldn't keep it clean

and initiated 4 a.m. workouts because of persistent academic and discipline issues. The regimen was so grueling that some players walked off the field and quit. "As a team," says Ward, "we thought [the coaches] were against us and didn't like us."

Everything changed in Week 2. The Cougars trailed 31-27 at Louisville with less than four minutes remaining and faced a third-and-five from the Cardinals' 15-yard line. Ward lined up in the shotgun and noticed the tells of an all-out blitz: corners in press coverage, safeties five yards off the line of scrimmage and linebackers on their toes.

A month earlier in practice Ward misread the same look and earned a tongue-lashing from Applewhite and Herman. This time Ward delivered exactly what

**POWER COUPLE**  
When Herman arrived from Ohio State, Ward's days as a wide receiver were over. The pair powered the Cougars to 40.6 points per game last year—a 36% increase in scoring.







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## QUIET MOMENT

Ward has come a long way from high school, where he could let his play do the talking while leading the Lions to a 24-6 record as a starter.



**AS A TEAM WE THOUGHT [THE COACHES] WERE AGAINST US AND DIDN'T LIKE US," SAYS WARD.**

the coaches had been coaxing out of him since they arrived—a loud, confident and decisive check. The quick-hit pass play to junior receiver Demarcus Ayers beat the pressure for an easy touchdown, and Houston pulled off the upset 34-31. “Had we not beaten Louisville, I might’ve fallen flat on my face because of how hard [we were on the players],” says Herman. Afterward, “all the fence-riders in the locker room came to the good side.”

The ensuing run led to the Cougars’ highest post-season ranking since 1979, sparked talk of a Big 12 invite and changed the calculus coming into 2016. They’re now favorites to repeat as AAC champs, and Herman, who got a raise from \$1.35 million to \$2.8 million, is considered a shoo-in if the Texas, Texas A&M or LSU jobs open at year’s end. The coach won’t talk about other schools, but he’s already campaigning for his current team, which opens

against No. 6 Oklahoma at NRG Stadium on Sept. 3 and hosts No. 15 Louisville on Nov. 17. “If we beat those teams in the same year and win the AAC and that doesn’t get us into the

playoff” says Herman, “then the system’s broken.”

Testing that theory will rely on Ward’s continued development. He finished last year 13-0 as a starter—in the team’s only loss, 20-17 at Connecticut, he played sparingly on an injured left ankle—and made huge strides as a passer. “He has an impressive arm and the ability to deliver the ball accurately and with velocity,” according to ProFootball Focus, “but also shows an impressive aptitude to vary his passes and throw with touch and arc.” Ward finished ninth nationally in completion percentage (67.2) and threw just six interceptions against 17 touchdowns. His 21 rushing TDs ranked fifth in the nation. Along the way Herman coaxed a more authoritative voice out of Ward. “At first I was like, Why is he doing this?” Ward says. “But now I understand I have to exude that confidence.”

And can he do that? Yes, sir. □





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**JABRILL OF  
ALL TRADES**

Peppers can do everything from returning kicks to covering receivers, making him one of college football's rarest and most valuable defensive weapons.







# SWISS ARMY MEN

BY ANDY STAPLES | BY CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

The answer to the up-tempo offense isn't a scheme—it's a person, a versatile defender like Michigan's Jabrill Peppers, who can play anywhere and make a quarterback doubt everything

AS **JIM HARBAUGH** describes all the ways he could use Jabrill Peppers on a football field, the Michigan coach starts to sound like Forrest Gump's pal Bubba, enumerating the myriad ways to prepare shrimp.

*Put him in at corner. Put him in at safety. Put him in at nickel. Put him in at linebacker.* Jabrill Scampi.

*He can be a returner of the punts, a returner of the kickoffs. Could probably be our best slot receiver. Would give De'Veon [Smith] and all our running backs a run for their money.* Jabrill Creole.

*Could be a Wildcat quarterback. Could be an outside receiver.*



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You get the point. There is precious little the 6' 1", 208-pound Peppers can't do on a football field. So it stands to reason that the junior's primary position will be one of critical strategic importance to the Wolverines—and it is, even if first-year Michigan defensive coordinator Don Brown simply calls it “Sam.” That spare sobriquet commonly refers to strongside linebacker, the position Peppers will nominally play this season. But like former Michigan coordinator D.J. Durkin, now Maryland's head coach, Brown will ask Peppers to—at various times—assume the responsibilities of everyone except the defensive tackles. Peppers will fill gaps as a linebacker. He'll head down to the line of scrimmage and rush the quarterback. He'll cover receivers and tight ends. He may drop back to safety and cover a zone. He'll spy a mobile quarterback. He'll also return kicks and occasionally play tailback. But the Sam role matters most because so few can play it the way Brown wants Peppers to play it.

Since 2008, when the NCAA adopted the current clock rules and spawned an era of up-tempo offense, defensive coordinators have tried with little success to devise a system that can match up with an opponent who won't allow the defense time to substitute. The answer, it turns out, wasn't a scheme but a person. What those coordinators were seeking was a human Swiss Army knife, a player who can successfully operate on any of the defense's three levels and move effortlessly among them from play to play. With such a player on the field, a 4-3 base can morph into a 4-2-5 nickel without a single substitution or presnap move to

tip off the quarterback. That 4-3 could also transform into (what appears to be) a blitzing 3-4 by walking the hybrid player to the line of scrimmage. Of course, the hybrid doesn't always have to blitz when he drops deep into the box (the area that encompasses the width of the offense's down linemen and extends about five yards beyond the line of scrimmage). He might bail and cover a receiver. Or he could come screaming off the edge faster than any defensive end or linebacker an offensive tackle has ever seen.



**PLAYER WITH** all those attributes is indeed rare. Peppers is one of the few. So is Florida State sophomore Derwin James. So is Boston College senior Matt Milano, the x-factor of a Brown-designed defense that allowed the fewest yards per play in the nation last year and whose play Peppers studied this off-season to learn his revised role.

Milano came to the Eagles in 2013 as a 6-foot, 200-pound safety from Orlando. After his freshman season he was stuck at fourth on the secondary's depth chart. Brown suggested a move to linebacker, an idea that initially frustrated Milano. “I'm second-guessing myself,” he says. “Am I ever going to get to play here?”

But Brown, a longtime defensive coach who came to BC the same season as Milano, had a vision. He had created a hybrid role for linebacker Sio Moore at Connecticut in 2011-12. And Brown had already turned 225-pound linebacker Kevin Pierre-Louis, a volume tackler, into one of the Eagles' best pass rushers. In '14,

## DERWIN'S EVOLUTION

As a true freshman in 2015, James made 91 tackles and had 4½ sacks—numbers that stand to improve as Seminoles coaches give him more responsibility.



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## WHAT'S THE COMMON DENOMINATOR?" ASKS ADDAZIO. "THEY COULD FLAT RUN."

Milano backed up linebacker Josh Keyes. By the time Milano took over the starting Sam spot last season, he'd bulked up to 218 pounds. Under traditional position archetypes, that would have made Milano a perfectly sized strong safety, a slightly undersized outside linebacker or a drastically undersized pass rusher. Yet he led the Eagles with 17½ tackles for loss (6½ of them sacks) while playing a position whose responsibilities varied wildly from snap to snap. "First down I might be coming off the edge," Milano says. "Second down I may be covering a slot receiver. Third down I may be acting like I'm coming, and then I'm dropping."

Hybrid players have always helped defenses exploit mismatches. Hall of Fame linebacker Lawrence Taylor used his speed off the edge to redefine the position in the NFL during the 1980s. In the '90s college coordinator Joe Lee Dunn's 3-3-5 defenses at Mississippi and New Mexico used linebacker/safety hybrids who could line up anywhere. What differentiates these new hybrids from those are their size and speed. They are smaller than players who usually rush the passer but tough enough to handle the pounding. They're also fast enough to cover slot receivers one-on-one, making them more versatile against offenses that spread the field and force defenders to tackle in space. "What's the common denominator with those guys?" asks Boston College coach Steve Addazio of Milano, Keyes and Pierre-Louis. "They could flat run. They could play man coverage on receivers and be strong in the box."

Upon his arrival at Florida State, James proved quickly that he, too, could flat run. An early enrollee, he returned an interception for a touchdown early in the Seminoles' 2015 spring game. In the summer he was caught on video jumping over a full-grown man and besting some of his fastest teammates in a footrace. Seminoles coach Jimbo Fisher knew he had recruited a remarkable athlete, but it would take the





better part of a season for the staff to understand all the things that could be done with James. Defensive coordinator Charles Kelly started by playing him at free safety, usually in a one-high look that allowed James to survey the action and use his exceptional closing speed to make a play on the ball or thump the ballcarrier. As the season progressed, James spent more time near the line of scrimmage. Against Florida last

Nov. 28 he lined up outside an offensive tackle on most of the obvious passing downs and finished with nine tackles and half a sack in the Seminoles' 27-2 win. But he didn't make a tackle on the

play that generated the most buzz. On a first-and-10 near the end of the first half, James lined up just outside of 280-pound defensive end DeMarcus Walker. Florida tackle Mason Halter, expecting Walker to rush, got the 211-pound James instead, and when James rocketed off the line, he sent Halter flying. Florida quarterback Treon Harris made a nifty juke and got the pass off, but James—who had also covered Florida's receivers and tight ends

in the same quarter—had served notice that he could also manhandle a 295-pound offensive lineman.

"Everybody talks about his athletic ability, which is off the charts. It's second to none," Fisher says of James. "But it's his instincts to play the game. I don't know if I've ever coached a guy that I said could play anywhere on the field. I think he could play any position."

James has had little trouble adjusting to the workload. In fact, he says he's playing fewer positions than he did at Haines City (Fla.) High, where he routinely took snaps on offense—at quarterback, running back and wide receiver—and even manned the defensive line from time to time. "I lined up at noseguard when we felt like the center was weak," James says. "I didn't just start doing this."

The data deep-divers at Pro Football Focus theorized in May that James might be the best returning defender in the nation. After breaking down all of his 719 defensive snaps last season (405 at free safety, 132 in the slot, 108 as a box safety or linebacker, 70 as an edge rusher and four at cornerback), PFF analyst Gordon McGuinness came to a conclusion similar to Fisher's. "Considering that, in theory, he should get better with age, it's terrifying to think how good he can be over the next two or three seasons in college," McGuinness wrote.

Aside from having the freakish athleticism required to rush the passer and cover receivers, Fisher points out, an up-tempo offense killer must also be smart. "Think about all the intelligence you have

to have to play all those positions and not make mistakes," he says. James must know all of the Seminoles' coverages and many of their blitzes. He must also know how to react if he's lined up as an edge rusher and an offense goes against tendency and runs straight at him. So he spends time practicing with different groups. He'll work on pass-rushing moves alongside Walker and then hone his coverage skills with corner Marquez White. Seminoles coaches worked James with the second-team corners during spring practice; Fisher says James is as capable as any of Florida State's full-timers at the position.

Elsewhere in the ACC, Duke coach David Cutcliffe and his staff will have to test the physical and mental limits of their hybrid players. Cutcliffe and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles spent the past three seasons crafting the "strike safety" position around 210-pound Jeremy Cash, now with the Panthers. "Jeremy was a Sam linebacker. Jeremy was a free safety. Jeremy was a strong safety," Cutcliffe says. "We'd never had that kind of versatility." Cash was a stat-sheet stuffer who in 39 games made 333 tackles, 38 tackles for loss (eight sacks) and six interceptions. His adaptability and intelligence—Cash earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in liberal studies—allowed the Blue Devils to do on defense what the up-tempo offenses did to them. Duke's defense could change for-

## VARIED TREASURE

Replacing a Swiss Army knife defender like the Eagles' Milano (left) can be difficult, but Duke hopes McCarthy (26) can grow into the role that Cash (16) filled so successfully.

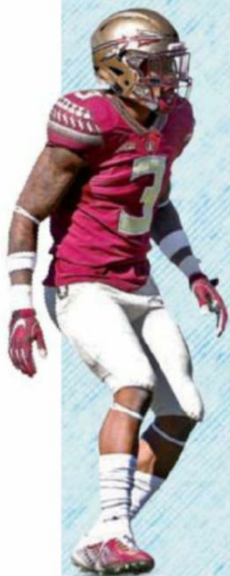






## DUAL THREATS

Like the 6' 3", 211-pound James (below), Peppers (right) has the body type to withstand the physicality in the trenches and the speed to take down receivers in the open field.



mations without substituting, and it could make—and change—play calls in a fraction of the time it used to take. “I told Jim that everybody’s priding themselves on no-huddle, NASCAR-fast offense,” Cutcliffe says. “Let’s do the same thing defensively.” This season Knowles must find out how far he can stretch senior Corbin McCarthy, a 200-pounder originally recruited as a cornerback who, despite his relatively small frame, can bench-press 400 pounds.

**I F COACHES CAN** deploy their Swiss Army knives correctly, they can turn the tables on up-tempo offenses that have rendered defenses boring and predictable. Without the benefit of substitutions, defenses are limited by the personnel already on the field. They have little time to make calls and struggle to mask blitzes. This makes the quarterback’s job much easier, especially on run-pass option plays that allow the QB to choose whether the play is a run or a pass. Before the snap, quarterbacks will often count the number of defenders in the box. If it’s seven or more, he should probably throw. Less than seven, he should allow the tailback to take the ball when he stuffs it in his belly at the beginning of the play. But what happens when Florida State’s James lines up as an edge rusher and then, instead of chasing the quarterback, shadows the tight end in coverage? That bit of deception alters the count. James might be the seventh man in the box, but he isn’t coming for the passer. That forces the quarterback to make a split-second decision: Throw into heavy coverage, or throw with a potential fourth rusher coming from an unknown location.

Either way, his job just became much more difficult.

“The thing I compare that to is us having two running backs in the backfield and being able to motion them out and have them go catch the ball,” Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield says. “It’s a personnel and a formation issue. If you have a guy like [the Seahawks’] Kam Chancellor who can play linebacker, who can stand up as a defensive end or go play safety, you don’t know what kind of defense they’re in.” That’s why Mayfield is glad this particular brand of hybrid remains scarce: “They can mix up your defense and make it so much better. You’re not predictable when you have a guy like that.”

In Ann Arbor, Brown keeps devising more ways to use Peppers. When he took the Michigan job last December, Brown broke down video of the Wolverines’ 2015 season to determine how best to use the players he inherited. He noticed that while Peppers played safety in Durkin’s defense, Durkin hadn’t used Peppers much differently than Brown had used Milano. As he watched the five-star recruit, quite possibly Michigan’s best athlete since Charles Woodson, Brown let his imagination run wild. “We’ve got to give this guy a bunch of jobs,” he remembers thinking.

Peppers will take whatever Brown dreams up. “It’s not really a new position,” Peppers says. “Just in his defense the nickel plays more like a linebacker. But I’m definitely in the box a lot more, and I’m blitzing a lot more. I guess he’s just trying to get me around the ball, let my instinct and awareness take over.” So does that mean he plans to lead the Wolverines—or perhaps the Big Ten—in sacks? “My only stat is more wins than losses,” Peppers says. “Preferably no losses.” □





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Although he was shielded from the press last season, UCLA quarterback Josh Rosen still made waves on social media. Now the reigning Pac-12 offensive freshman of the year is ready for his close-up. Smart, supremely confident and a bit of a wild card, he's determined to keep it real, but where that will leave him on the Manning-Manziel continuum is anyone's guess

🔥 BY PETE THAMEL | 📷 BY ROBERT BECK

# LOOK WHO'S TALKING

60

AUGUST 15, 2016  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED







### ▼▼▼ **FLYING START**

The top-rated quarterback recruit in 2015, Rosen became the first true freshman to open the season for the Bruins under center.





**JOSH ROSEN ARRIVES** early to room 170 in Dodd Hall and plops down in the back row. He's seated behind two young women, one sipping green juice and the other reading the label on a Vitamin Water Zero. Rosen is UCLA's sophomore starting quarterback and the early favorite to be the No. 1 pick in the 2018 NFL draft, which means he may one day be studied in the class that's about to begin: Communications Studies 157, an investigation of fame and celebrity in the age of social media.

During the next 125 minutes lecturer Steve Peterson holds forth on everything from the Kardashians to Billy Ray Cyrus's mullet. Like many summer classes at UCLA, this one has a high concentration of foreign students, and most don't recognize Rosen. "We've got like nine kids from Lebanon," Rosen says. "It's pretty tight."

Rosen—his own sandy blond hair a picture of sculpted randomness—is wearing a black T-shirt on which Mickey Mouse melts like the Wicked Witch of the West. He pulls out his homework assignment from a UCLA-issued backpack with ROSEN FOOTBALL embroidered on it. The paper, "Transitioning From Childhood Stardom to Adulthood," includes research on Taylor Swift and Moises Arias, though the 19-year-old Rosen could have been the subject.

When he came to Westwood in January 2015, he was among the most heralded recruits in school history, ranking 12th on Scout.com. Rosen won the starting job in camp, then completed 60.0% of his passes for 3,670 yards and 23 touchdowns and was named the Pac-12's offensive freshman of the year. After an 8–5 finish the Bruins have been



**JOSH HAS A MORE PURE THROW ANYONE YOU'LL SEE," SAYS MORA.**

picked to win the Pac-12 South this year, and they have changed from the spread to a more pro-style offense to better suit their 6' 4", 220-pound triggerman. One NFL scout says that Rosen is already the top quarterback prospect in the FBS; after the April draft, UCLA coach Jim Mora Jr. said that if Rosen had been eligible he would have been picked ahead of Cal QB Jared Goff, who went No. 1. "I'm not comparing him to Peyton Manning in the NFL," says Mora, who as an assistant with the Saints got to know Manning when he was a high school senior in New Orleans. "But at this stage of his career—essentially the same point—he's the same guy in terms of football intelligence and work ethic."

CHRIS WILLIAMS/ICON SPORTSWARE/AP





**JOE ROSEN THROWS** darts in the living room of his off-campus apartment, which is lit exclusively by white Christmas lights. He moved into the second-floor shanty this summer, joining teammates and SAE fraternity brothers Dylan Luther and Adam Searl. Rosen could have his choice of housing, but he's picked this place with these guys—both walk-ons—in an effort to have a more typical college experience. The pad is an ode to Rosen's moment before his moment, a quintessential collegiate cocoon in which he'll complete his transition to what's next—slowly.

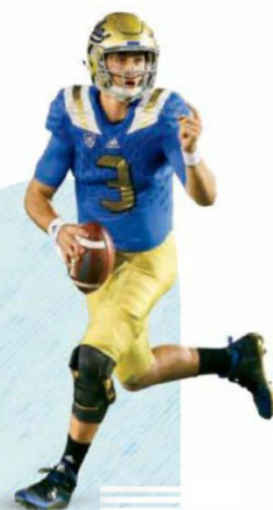
The only house rule is posted on the wall: MISS DARTBOARD—MUST TAKE A SHOT OR SHOTGUN A BEER. A yellow SAE flag hangs on another wall, next to a 65-inch, 4K flat screen and above the instruments for *Rock Band*. Rosen's decorative touch is the silver disco ball hanging in the corner. "Can you dry-clean a couch?" Rosen asks between throws. "Like, it's pretty disgusting."

A shelf spans the width of the room, displaying 68 empty beer bottles, all different brands, from Stella to Rebel IPA to Pabst Blue Ribbon. Rosen says that because he moved in just a few weeks ago, he hasn't added any empties to the shrine. Luther assures him that many taste buds had been sacrificed: "There were some really, really gross ones."

Rosen considers playing *Rock Band* to put off a "binge studying" session, then extends his procrastination by pondering whether a dartboard can get too many holes in it and what Andrew Luck's Stanford dorm room looked like. Looking around, he asks hopefully, "Is this the frattiest room you've ever been in?"

There's much more to Rosen than playing ball and being a bro. He's on track to graduate with a degree in economics in three years and holds a 3.2 GPA. The books in his bedroom range from *Wolf of Wall Street* to *Unbroken* to *Breakfast of Champions*. "I hate reading," he says. "But I'm trying to force myself because studies have shown that it's literally the only way to matter-of-factly boost your IQ." He envies Luck for having the "raw IQ" to graduate from Stanford with a degree in architectural engineering. He looks up to actor Leonardo DiCaprio for his environmental stances and to Tesla CEO Elon Musk "because he doesn't really care about money."

Rosen is nothing if not sure of himself, which he says is why he has clashed with adults and coaches over the years. He also admits he's not the most beloved guy on the UCLA sorority scene. "I have a superiority complex I need to get rid of," he says. "Girls that I am really good homies with tell me about how



**BEAR DOWN**  
With a chance to win the Pac-12 South, UCLA lost to USC by 19 as Rosen fumbled and threw two interceptions, ending his school-record streak of 245 passes without a pick.

## ING MOTION THAN JUST ABOUT "IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING."

Rosen's desire to remain a typical college kid has clashed with his role as the face of the program. Since arriving at UCLA he has set off a social media firestorm over presidential politics, deleted a provocative Instagram post and removed a hot tub from his dorm room. Rosen wants to be the kid who rearranged a neighbor's lawn ornaments in sexually suggestive positions. His coach wants him to make a choice: Peyton Manning or Johnny Manziel.

"I'm not going to f----- get in trouble for drugs or anything like that, but I don't want to be this crystal-clean guy with perfect responses," says Rosen. "I'm not going to pretend to be 50. I just want to be happy and enjoy the experiences I have and take advantage of every opportunity I've been given."



often they have to defend my image to girls that don't know me." Earlier in the day he described what he's looking for in a future partner: "My wife is going to be a fighter. I need someone to tell me to f--- off every once in a while." While noting that the demands of football don't leave him enough time for a girlfriend, he acknowledged, "I'm not mature enough right now."

Atop Rosen's dresser sits a box of watches, ranging from a family Rolex that's more than 50 years old to a \$25 timepiece that he wears on game days. The face of the watch doubles as essentially a galactic address, showing Earth as it sits in the wider view of the universe. "It reminds me to keep everything in perspective," he says. "Even if the whole world goes to s---, understand that you are a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, little instance in a much larger universe and that you should just take things for what they are and move on."

**J** **OSH ROSEN** grew up in a four-bedroom house in Manhattan Beach, Calif., that's now valued at nearly \$8 million. The walls and bookshelves of the home are adorned with reminders of his family's vast success—his father's regional championship ice skating medals, his mother's journalism awards. One family friend calls the Rosens "American royalty."

Josh's father, Charles Rosen, is a spine surgeon who was on President Obama's short list for surgeon general. Josh's mother, Liz Lippincott, is a former editor at *Sportstyle* and *Golfpro* magazines, and both are accomplished ice dancers. (They divorced in 2012.) Lippincott, a Princeton graduate, is the great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Wharton, who founded the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. She's also the great-great-granddaughter of Joshua Ballinger Lippincott, who founded the J.B. Lippincott publishing company in 1836. Josh, the middle of three kids, is named after him. "I come from a wealthy, affluent, educated family," Rosen says. "I mean, not like get-a-Lambo-for-my-16th-birthday wealthy, but like, affluent."

USC tennis coach Peter Smith, a friend of the family, describes Rosen as the "classic kid from your over-achieving family." Other than his genes, the thing that most set Rosen up for football stardom was a tennis career that peaked and fizzled before he became a teenager. Rosen was at times the No. 1-ranked 10-and-under player in Southern California, and he earned a national ranking at 12. "He could have been as good as he wanted to be," says Smith.

Rosen appeared on his way to at least a professional career, if not his dream of playing Roger Federer on Centre Court at Wimbledon. But the sport began to con-



sume him: He'd feel invincible after tournament wins and inconsolable after each loss. "I was wondering why he was doing it," Charles says. "He just didn't enjoy it."

A right shoulder injury sidelined Rosen for a few months when he was 12, and it changed his perspective and the course of his sporting life. During his time away he discovered friends, girls and the camaraderie of team sports. He asked himself, Do I really want to go back to this sport that has been making me so miserable?

Rosen's tennis career did have an enduring impact. The 3.5 seconds a quarterback typically gets to throw feels like an eternity compared to reaction times in tennis. On the court he learned to trust his eyes and not overthink things. In football he exhibits a non-chalance after interceptions or negative plays—which has drawn criticism because some have taken it for indifference—but in tennis he knew he could lose dozens of points yet still win the match. Mistakes are part of the game. "I learned how I competitively function," he says. "Tennis meant too much for me. It





**I'M NOT GOING TO GET IN TROUBLE," SAYS ROSEN, "BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE THIS CRYSTAL-CLEAN GUY WITH PERFECT RESPONSES."**



ruined it. So when I play football, I've learned to sort of take things lightly and keep moving. I wouldn't want to lose the sport of football like I lost tennis."

**J**OSH ROSEN EXITS the Bruins' athletic facilities wearing a royal-blue T-shirt, gray workout pants—both LuluLemon—and Rainbow flip-flops. He opens up the seat of his powder-blue Genuine Scooter and straps on an American-flag-patterned helmet. "Of course they do!" he says when asked if his teammates make fun of him. "But I also have a mustache."

Rosen doesn't drive the scooter for attention but because it makes numeric sense and because he loves the logic and certainty of numbers. It costs \$237 per quarter to park a car at the facility; it's free to park the scooter. (Plus he can put it in the best spots.)

But that brand of pragmatism has not yet influenced all of his decision-making. Rosen wore a white F--- TRUMP bandana around a blue baseball hat while playing at Trump National Golf Club in Rancho

**FULL CIRCLE**  
Mora (top left) has tried to develop Rosen on the field and off, though he couldn't stop his QB from taking a dorm-room soak or tweaking Trump with a golf hat.

Palos Verdes, Calif., in April, a round he bought as an ironic birthday present for a friend who supported Bernie Sanders. "Every single employee on the entire course complimented me," Rosen says. He posted a picture on Instagram, where he has 21,400 followers, and it went viral. A faux controversy bloomed. *Rolling Stone* blogged about him. His teammates overwhelmingly supported him. Mora brought up the Manziel comparison. "I don't regret posting the photo at all," Rosen says, "because personally I thought it was hilarious."

He does regret that the profanity overshadowed his stance. "I want people to know I'm a real person, that I don't have someone running my Instagram, I don't have someone prewriting all of my interviews and stuff," he says. "With Trump, I'm learning to evolve my message and understand how to convey the substance of it."

Nor did the fallout prevent him from speaking out again in May, when he posted a *Los Angeles Times* graphic on Instagram showing that UCLA's \$280 million deal with Under Armour is the largest in NCAA history. Rosen captioned the post with, "We're still amateurs, though . . . Gotta love non-profits. #NCAA." Rosen deleted that post and got an earful from Mora, who was disappointed that the quarterback's statement distracted from an important day for the university. "I said you can't do that," Mora recalls. "He says, 'So many of my teammates have nothing. I have a platform where I can advocate.' I said, 'I understand that, Josh, and respect it. But there's a bigger picture you have to understand.'"

Perhaps Rosen will learn some of that in Comm 157; social media has not always been kind to him. Last fall, inspired by a friend at Arizona State, he went online and paid \$400 for an inflatable Lay-Z-Spa hot tub. ("It came down to my roommate and I saying, 'What are we going to be able to tell our kids we did in college?'") He installed it in his dorm room, using a 20-foot beer funnel for a hose. His mom even came over to see it. But a picture posted on Instagram by one of Rosen's friends ended up going viral, drawing coverage from TMZ. The school forced Rosen to remove the tub. He had to write an apology paper to the school, which he struggled to take seriously.

"I'm not a social-media guy, I'm not," Rosen says. "It's just once every three weeks it's like, Hey, let's shake some s--- up," Rosen says. "I like to be a real person and show personality. People appreciate that."

**J**OSH ROSEN dropped back on a third-and-16 in the fourth quarter of UCLA's 56-35 loss at Stanford last season and zipped a ball nearly 40 yards through two defenders to receiver Thomas Duarte. The



touchdown pass showcased everything the NFL will value about Rosen—his lightning release, feathery touch and advanced ability to read defenses.

When Rosen jogged off the field after the play, Mora recalls him saying, “I figured, what the hell, I might as well throw it.” Mora implored Rosen to do so more often: “Josh, you’ve got to make that throw at every point in the game, because that’s a throw you’re capable of making and others aren’t. And that’s an NFL throw.” No one knows this better than Mora, who has coached both the Falcons (2004 to ’06) and the Seahawks (’09). “Give me a little credit, I know what I have here,” Mora says with a laugh. “Josh has a more pure throwing motion than just about any quarterback you’ll ever see. It’s a beautiful thing.”

Rosen’s football path is more remarkable for what he didn’t do rather than what he did. He didn’t hire a high-profile quarterback coach. (“I think it’s all b.s.,” he says. “I think they are just great marketers.”) He also didn’t go to one of Southern California’s proven football strongholds, such as Mater Dei, Oaks Christian or Santa Margarita. And he didn’t choose one of the usual Top 10 suspects despite getting scholarship offers from almost all of them. “I’m not a fan of, like, powerhouses,” he says. “I like messing up the system. I’m all about equality and kind of bringing some phoenixes from the fire.”

Rosen attended St. John Bosco High, a Catholic school in blue-collar Bellflower that appeared a strange fit for a Jewish kid from tony Manhattan Beach. His transition wasn’t seamless. Early in his career Rosen overthought, delivering 40-second explanations to offensive coordinator Chad Johnson about a play that lasted six. Rosen developed a habit of throwing across his body, which often led to interceptions, and he made so many presnap adjustments that he’d get delay-of-game penalties. Bosco coach Jason Negro found himself saying, “Everybody understands that you’re an intelligent guy, Josh. You don’t have to wear it on your sleeve.”

The phoenix rose his junior season. Rosen led Bosco to a 16–0 record, its first CIF Southern Section championship and its first state title, in 2013, throwing for 3,200 yards and 39 touchdowns. That included three straight playoff games in which a running clock was evoked as a mercy rule. Bosco went 12–2 in Rosen’s senior year, and along the way he endeared himself to the coaches and faculty by napping on the floor of the football offices, raising money through local businesses to help kids on his team pay for road trips and earning a weighted 4.8 GPA.

Four years earlier, on his visit to Bosco, Rosen had asked the coaches and academic officials if coming



**EVEN AS A USC FAN GROWING UP, I LIKED SAW POTENTIAL IN THE PROGRAM,” ROSEN WANTED TO JUST MESS WITH EVERYONE.**

out of their school he’d be able to get into Stanford. Growing up the son of Penn and Princeton graduates, Rosen saw Stanford as a football Ivy. He attended a camp in Palo Alto the summer before his junior year but returned without a scholarship offer, heartbroken. Rosen recalls that he didn’t click with the mild-mannered Cardinal coach David Shaw, who appeared put off by questions about the depth chart. Shaw says the Cardinal coaches simply decided to not take a quarterback in that class because of roster numbers.

Rosen returned to Bosco devastated but now calls the snub “probably the best thing that ever happened to me,” he says. “I’m not Stanford, and I would have hated it. It was good for me because it killed my ego a little bit.”

Still, Rosen’s ego remained an issue. During the summer-camp circuit of 2014, Elite 11 coach Trent Dilfer butted heads with Rosen after the prodigy took liberties with the playbook. Dilfer made public comments that Rosen needed to “buy into what I’m preaching.” (He now predicts that Rosen’s adjustment to UCLA’s new offense will be telling.





## UCLA A LOT BECAUSE I SAYS, "AND I REALLY

"

"Everyone is depending on him buying into something bigger than himself," Dilfer says. "If he decides to do it, he'll win the Heisman and the Pac-12 and be the first pick in the draft. He's that talented.")

Despite the negative talk, Rosen remained in demand, and he surprised many by choosing the Bruins. "Even as a USC fan growing up, I liked UCLA a lot because I saw potential in the program," Rosen says, "and I really wanted to just mess with everyone."

**JOSH ROSEN EXITS** Dodd Hall, and he strolls past the eucalyptus trees on the sun-splashed main quad. He stops in front of stately Royce Hall and points out the brick building's 52 asymmetries. They were included because the builders felt "only God can make something perfect."

Rosen is thrilled that his college imperfections are playing out at UCLA; he has a genuine affinity for the school and program. But he admits he picked it for all the wrong reasons. Besides the chance to "mess" with people, he liked the opportunity to start early, the

gear—hats and shirts, etc.—and the L.A. social scene. He now appreciates the networking opportunities and the ability to retain some semblance of anonymity in a town full of A-listers. "In retrospect, being Jewish is a big reason why I should have considered UCLA," he says. "Just because of how Jewish Hollywood is, and they really want someone to look up to because they just don't have professional athletes."

Rosen also has a unique relationship with his coach. The Moras live two blocks from the Rosens, close enough that Mora walked to the in-home visit. The families have become close because of Rosen's friendship with Mora's daughter, Lillia, a USC junior.

On Christmas Eve two years ago Rosen fell asleep on Mora's couch. Last Christmas the Moras hosted the Rosens. The day after UCLA lost to rival USC 40–21 to close the regular season, Rosen showed up at Mora's house. They watched an NFL game together, mostly in silence. Mora took that as a sweet gesture, a player stopping by to pick up his coach. "He's a challenge," Mora says of Rosen. "But he's a fun challenge, a great challenge and an interesting challenge."

Rosen's own set of challenges? He wants to lead UCLA to a conference title and eventually become a Super Bowl-winning, All-Pro quarterback who can make enough money off the field to play for the league minimum so his team can spend its salary cap space on his teammates. After football, he wants to work in venture capital and model his postfootball life after the business success of former Bruins quarterback Troy Aikman, who has owned multiple businesses and dabbles in real estate.

For now, though, Rosen just wants to be a college student. So with class finished, he heads back to his fratty apartment. There, he'll balance studying for his Comm 157 midterm with providing a case study for the course's future students. □

**BRU CREW**  
Although he's on a fast track to graduate, takes astrophysics for fun and grew up in a house now worth \$8 million, Rosen has proved to be a natural leader and has had no problem fitting in.



INSIDE HUDDLES, LOCKER ROOMS, TAILGATES, TRADITIONS AT

# CAMPUSES ACROSS THE NATION

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Really? Alabama *again*? It may seem boring, but it's hard to argue against the Tide. Of course, they will be challenged. The following pages reveal opposing coaches' thoughts on each of the contenders, what the numbers indicate about those squads and which players could make or break a team. Tighten your chin strap—opening kickoff approaches quickly

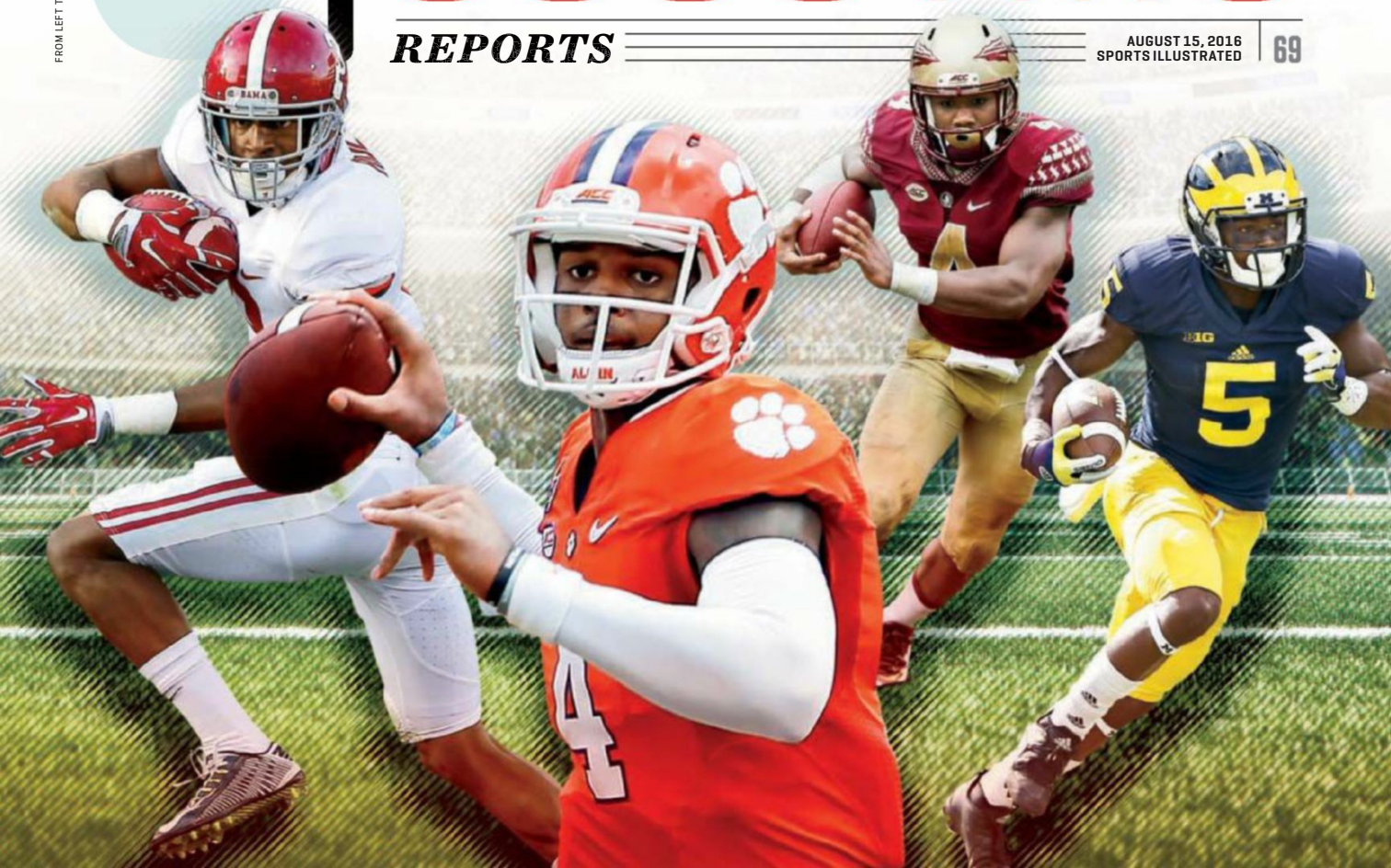
COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# SCOUTING

REPORTS

AUGUST 15, 2016  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

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ALABAMA



## 2016 SCHEDULE

**SATURDAY 9/3**  
**USC**  
(IN ARLINGTON,  
TEXAS)

**SATURDAY 9/10**  
**WESTERN**  
**KENTUCKY**

**SATURDAY 9/17**  
**AT OLE MISS**

**SATURDAY 9/24**  
**KENT STATE**

**SATURDAY 10/1**  
**KENTUCKY**

**SATURDAY 10/8**  
**AT ARKANSAS**

**SATURDAY 10/15**  
**AT TENNESSEE**

**SATURDAY 10/22**  
**TEXAS A&M**

BYE

**SATURDAY 11/5**  
**AT LSU**

**SATURDAY 11/12**  
**MISSISSIPPI**  
**STATE**

**SATURDAY 11/19**  
**CHATTANOOGA**

**SATURDAY 11/26**  
**AUBURN**

■ KEY MATCHUP  
■ BIGGEST GAME



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

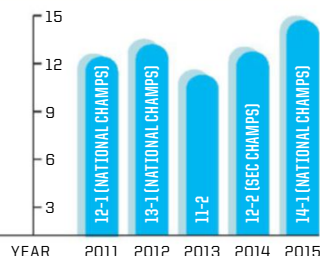
"[Offensive coordinator] Lane Kiffin brings some flavor. He changes it up. It makes it hard to focus on one thing. You used to just worry about stopping the run. Now they spread you out. They'll use jet motions and sweeps. And they can still line up and run between the tackles. They're going to miss Ryan Kelly tremendously at center. He was the quarterback of their line. They always have backs. They'll do what they do on the ground. But with [sophomore receiver] **Calvin Ridley** and [senior tight end] **D.J. Howard**, they may go deep more and be more creative with formations.

Defensive coordinator Jeremy Pruitt learned from Nick Saban when he was at Alabama earlier, so the defense shouldn't look much different without Kirby Smart [now the coach at Georgia]. When you turn on the tape, you see the speed and athleticism—it looks like an all-star team. Another thing that makes it difficult is the depth they have. They're able to roll a lot more guys in and keep the fatigue factor from taking over. They make you earn every yard on the ground, and they make you earn every yard through the air. As a play-caller, they make you feel like you've got to be absolutely perfect.

[Senior outside linebacker] **Tim Williams** has a great combination of speed and power. He's what everybody's looking for as a pass rusher.



5 YEAR  
TREND



## BIGGEST QUESTION MARK

Offensive coordinator Lane Kiffin has had to groom a new QB in all three of his seasons in Tuscaloosa. During camp he'll have to pick among junior **COOPER BATEMAN** (who started in Alabama's only loss last year), sophomore **DAVID CORNWELL**, redshirt freshman **BLAKE BARNETT** and freshman **JALEN HURTS**. Whoever gets the job, expect the Tide to run at a faster tempo that more resembles the '14 offense piloted by Blake Sims.

6

Interceptions last year for senior safety **Eddie Jackson**, tied for first in the conference.

76

Combined career carries among the Tide's five returning backs. Expect sophomores **Bo Scarbrough** and **Damien Harris** to emerge.

83.3%

Rate at which opponents scored upon reaching the red zone last year, 62nd in the FBS.

8

Consecutive 10-win seasons for the Crimson Tide, the longest current streak in the FBS.

2

Consecutive Bama losses to Ole Miss, one of only two teams to hand coach **Nick Saban** back-to-back defeats.

FAST FACTS

Even though he only played about 30 snaps a game last year, we made a tape of him for our offensive line to study. [Cornerback] **Minkah Fitzpatrick** was great as a freshman. He's only going to get better."

JOE ROBBINS/GETTY IMAGES



# 2 CLEMSON



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

“It starts and ends with [junior] **Deshaun Watson**. You have to limit his explosive plays by eliminating the run-pass options they use off the inside zone by being firm inside. You want Watson to carry the ball—then you’ve got to hit him. Passingwise, you’ve got to force him to play into the pocket because when he gets outside, he’s going to create big plays with his feet. You must do a great job with your rush-contain lanes and try to alter his sight angles.

Watson’s got game-breaking weapons with [junior] running back **Wayne Gallman** and [junior] receivers **Artavis Scott** and **Mike Williams**. [Senior tight end] **Jordan Leggett** won’t block anybody, but he can catch. The offensive line isn’t going to knock anybody off the ball.

They’ve always been stout on the defensive front, highlighted this year by [senior] tackle **Carlos Watkins**. **Cordrea Tankersley** is probably better than departed cornerback Mackensie Alexander, a second-round pick.

Defensive coordinator Brent Venables does a great job, but he’s late getting his calls in. That’s because they’re probably as good as anybody at stealing signals, and Venables is waiting to see your offensive call. [Clemson declined to comment.] And because they’re so multiple on defense, they’re prone to being out of position. They’ll line up late, and you can get a guy running free.” □

### FAST FACTS

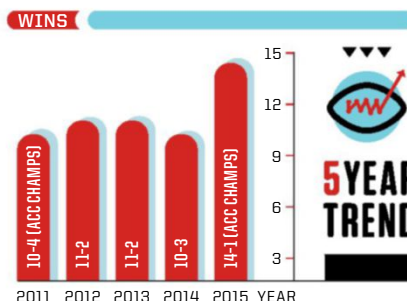
**1** Rank in third-down defense for each of the last two seasons.

**18** Times Deshaun Watson was sacked in 15 games last year, 27th fewest in the country.

**57.1%** Conversion rate on fourth down. The Tigers also succeeded on 46.9% of their third downs, 13th in the nation.

**3** Pairs of teammates who ranked in the top 50 in rushing last season, including running back Wayne Gallman (13th) and Watson (44th).

**115<sup>th</sup>** Rank in kick-return defense in 2015 (24.85 yards per runback).



## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 9/3  
**AT AUBURN**

SATURDAY, 9/10  
**TROY**

SATURDAY, 9/17  
**SOUTH CAROLINA STATE**

THURSDAY, 9/22  
**AT GEORGIA TECH**

SATURDAY, 10/1  
**LOUISVILLE**

FRIDAY, 10/7  
**AT BOSTON COLLEGE**

SATURDAY, 10/15  
**N.C. STATE**

BYE

SATURDAY, 10/29  
**AT FLORIDA STATE**

SATURDAY, 11/5  
**SYRACUSE**

SATURDAY, 11/12  
**PITTSBURGH**

SATURDAY, 11/19  
**AT WAKE FOREST**

SATURDAY, 11/26  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



## IMPACT FRESHMAN

Clemson has holes on the defensive line, and tackle **DEXTER LAWRENCE**'s physical attributes suggest he can fill one of them. At 6' 5" and 340 pounds, he was the No. 2 overall recruit in the class of 2016 out of Wake Forest (N.C.) High, and coach Dabo Swinney told reporters in the spring that Lawrence runs nearly a five-second 40-yard dash. After enrolling in January to get a jump on the Tigers' complex scheme, he's already on the two-deep. A fast mover indeed.





## 2016 SCHEDULE

MONDAY 9/5

**OLE MISS**  
(IN ORLANDO)

SATURDAY 9/10  
**CHARLESTON  
SOUTHERN**

SATURDAY 9/17  
**AT LOUISVILLE**

SATURDAY 9/24  
**AT SOUTH  
FLORIDA**

SATURDAY 10/1  
**NORTH  
CAROLINA**

SATURDAY 10/8  
**AT MIAMI**

SATURDAY 10/15  
**WAKE FOREST**

BYE

SATURDAY 10/29  
**CLEMSON**

SATURDAY 11/5  
**AT N.C. STATE**

FRIDAY 11/11  
**BOSTON  
COLLEGE**

SATURDAY 11/19  
**AT SYRACUSE**

SATURDAY 11/26  
**FLORIDA**

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME

# 3 FLORIDA STATE



7.4

Yards per carry last year for now junior RB Dalvin Cook, second best in the nation.

17.5

Points per game given up by the Seminoles last season, ninth best in the nation.

2

Sophomore safety Derwin James's position ranking, according to Pro Football Focus.

10 1/2

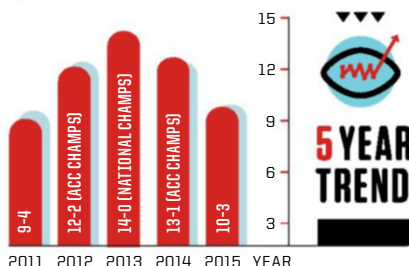
Sacks for DeMarcus Walker last year as a junior; he may draw enough attention for sophomore Josh Sweat to outdo him in 2016.

8 Defensive players who left for the NFL.

2

Kickers named Aguayo to play in Tallahassee: Freshman Ricky follows in the footsteps of brother Roberto (now with the Bucs).

WINS



5 YEAR  
TREND

FAST FACTS



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"With [5' 11", 213-pound running back] **Dalvin Cook**, you try to slow him down.

You can't stop him. You've got to limit him to singles and doubles, because if he gets going, he's going to get home runs. He's great at finding the crease and exploding through the hole. And on those mid-zone or wide-zone toss plays, he has a lot of freedom to find that crease. Because of the unsettled quarterback situation—it's between senior **Sean Maguire** and redshirt freshman **Deondre Francois** this year—they've had to run the ball a little bit more. They didn't have anybody that scared us last year at wideout—they were just good college receivers. But the Cook effect can help that. Teams have to worry about him so much that they may not worry about those receivers.

They're getting back to having the speed on the edge, like the old Florida State defenses used to have. They've got some of those bodies now on their team. Having [sophomore defensive back] **Derwin James** means there's another guy that the offensive coordinator and the quarterback have to be aware of on every play. He's one of those dynamic playmakers who can completely disrupt a play. They're going to miss [cornerback] Jalen Ramsey [first round, Jaguars]. He made a bunch of big plays on the boundary.

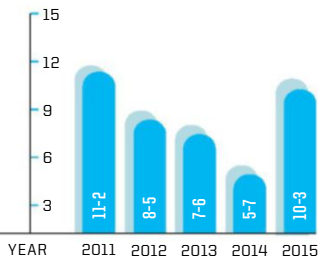
They're sound and they're physical up front. They'll make it a fistfight even if you want to play basketball on grass." □

## X-FACTOR



The 6' 3", 227-pound junior outside linebacker **Matthew Thomas**, who missed last season after left shoulder surgery, runs like a defensive back and hits like a truck. He and sophomore safety Derwin James, who moves all over the formation, will leave opposing quarterbacks guessing about who will drop into coverage and who will come screaming into the backfield.





YEAR 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"Everyone wants to know who's going to start at quarterback. Junior **John O'Korn** has the experience from two seasons at Houston, but [sophomore] **Wilton Speight** has the measurables [6' 6", 239 pounds]. Whoever it is, he's going to spend a lot of time handing it off to their stable of running backs, led by [5' 11", 228-pound senior] **De'Veon Smith**. Jim Harbaugh & Co. depend on the power run game to set up the pass. Their best player just might be [senior] tight end **Jake Butt**. He's a nightmare one-on-one because he can go up and get the ball, plus run after the catch. They're stockpiled with big, explosive receivers, especially [6' 3", 200-pound senior] **Jehu Chesson**, who's frightening down the field. The line is an above-average group that's embraced Harbaugh's physicality. Your best chance is to make them a passing team, which could backfire.

New DC Don Brown is an aggressive blitzer, and when he gets frustrated, he goes all out. Even though they were top five in total defense a year ago, they didn't have many takeaways, which I'm sure will be an emphasis. A good chunk of

# MICHIGAN

## X-FACTOR



The Wolverines need to replace four starting linebackers, and while they have two four-star freshmen on the roster, their most reliable option might be junior **MIKE MCCRAY**. The 6' 4" 240-pounder arrived in 2013, but a right-shoulder injury his sophomore year has limited him to just two tackles. He led the spring game with seven wrap-ups.

**4** Times Michigan rushed for less than 100 yards last year, including all three losses.

**75** Total yards gained by now sophomore quarterback Wilton Speight in seven starts last year, which puts him 75 ahead of this year's competition, juniors Shane Morris and John O'Korn.

**254.3** Yards per game allowed last year by Boston College—best in the nation—which was run by Michigan's new coordinator, Don Brown.

FAST FACTS

**4** Rank of Michigan's defense last year. The Wolverines were also third in third-down conversion rate defense (.276) and sixth in scoring defense (16.2 ppg).

their front seven is gone, but they'll be fine with [sophomore] freak **Jabril Peppers** moving from safety to linebacker. Their secondary is about the nation's best with a true lockdown guy in [senior cornerback] **Jourdan Lewis**.

This is a national championship contender." □



## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
HAWAII

SATURDAY 9/10  
CENTRAL  
FLORIDA

SATURDAY 9/17  
COLORADO

SATURDAY 9/24  
PENN STATE

SATURDAY 10/1  
WISCONSIN

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT RUTGERS

BYE

SATURDAY 10/22  
ILLINOIS

SATURDAY 10/29  
AT MICHIGAN  
STATE

SATURDAY 11/5  
MARYLAND

SATURDAY 11/12  
AT IOWA

SATURDAY 11/19  
INDIANA

SATURDAY 11/26  
AT OHIO STATE

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME





## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 9/3  
AT WISCONSIN  
(IN GREEN BAY)

SATURDAY, 9/10  
JACKSONVILLE  
STATE

SATURDAY, 9/17  
MISSISSIPPI  
STATE

SATURDAY, 9/24  
AT AUBURN

SATURDAY, 10/1  
MISSOURI

SATURDAY, 10/8  
AT FLORIDA

SATURDAY, 10/15  
SOUTHERN MISS

SATURDAY, 10/22  
OLE MISS

BYE

SATURDAY, 11/5  
ALABAMA

SATURDAY, 11/12  
AT ARKANSAS

SATURDAY, 11/19  
SOUTH ALABAMA

THURSDAY, 11/24  
AT TEXAS A&M

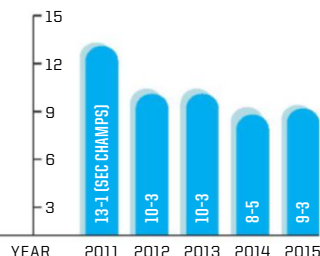
■ KEY MATCHUP  
■ BIGGEST GAME



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"New defensive coordinator Dave Aranda is renowned for using multiple looks, but he's got so much talent that he could just play base defense if he wanted. A hulking line will once again rotate plenty of fresh bodies. Their linebackers are solid and have lots of speed. The secondary is as talented as it gets with future NFL picks in [senior] cornerback **Tre'Davious White** and [junior] strong safety **Jamal Adams**. Hopefully you can find a way to run the ball against them, but their front seven is so good that's a tough task.

[Junior] **Leonard Fournette** isn't just the best running back in the country—he's the best to play the position in years. But they're not only a run-the-ball-down-your-throat offense. They do a really nice job with the play-action pass, which is hard to defend when Fournette is always one broken tackle away from the end zone. They've got a talented receiving corps to go along with a massive, physical offensive line, but the biggest question is quarterback **Brandon Harris** [54%



## IMPACT NEWCOMER

Coach Les Miles was able to lure defensive coordinator **DAVE ARANDA** to Baton Rouge. Aranda, the team's third DC in three seasons, orchestrated the nation's top scoring defense (13.7 points per game) at Wisconsin last fall, his third season in Madison. At LSU he'll have nine returning starters to make his aggressive 3-4 scheme hum.

18 Returning starters (nine on each side), most of any team in the Top 25.

5 Defensive backs with starting experience. Last year the quintet combined to pick off six passes.

10 Number of the Tigers' 12 opponents that had winning records in '15, giving LSU one of the toughest schedules in the country.

5 Consecutive defeats to Alabama, LSU's longest such streak since 1981, when the Tide won their 11th straight.

1,953 Rushing yards last year for Heisman Trophy contender **Leonard Fournette** (6.5 per carry, 22 TDs), third-most in the nation.

FAST FACTS

completions, 13 TDs, six INTs]. He's a capable passer, and now that he's got a year of experience as a starter, he should be better. From the start to the end of last season, he made a lot of progress.

I don't see a lot of weaknesses in this team. They've got the talent to not only win the SEC, but also the national championship." □

MIKE GROLUP/AP





# OKLAHOMA



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"Defensively, they're good. [Coordinator Mike] Stoops brings different looks, schemes and surprise blitzes each week. It keeps play-callers off balance. It helps to have good players, obviously, but they're good at changing up fronts and mixing in pressures, too. They'll be good defending the passing game because they bring back three guys in the secondary. **Jordan Thomas**, their [junior] corner, is so good, he can occupy your best guy, and they'll just do whatever they want to your other receivers.

**Baker Mayfield** fits perfectly with what they want to do. It's a similar scheme to the one he ran in high school and at Texas Tech—an Air Raid-based attack—so he knows where to get the ball, how to get the ball out quick and how to get out of a bad play. He can hurt you running, too.

Those two stud running backs [junior **Samaje Perine** and sophomore **Joe Mixon**] really complement each other. I'm not sure which one is better; they're both first-round-type players. They're physical and fast, and the coaches utilize them really well. With their receivers, they may not have one star, but as a group they may have more depth. [Senior] **Dede Westbrook** made some nice plays last year, and [sophomore] **Mark Andrews** can hurt you.

[Coach Bob] Stoops walks and talks with a lot of swagger, and his guys feed off it. They think they're the best, and they play like it." □

## FAST FACTS

83

Tackles in 2015 by senior ILB **Jordan Evans**, the only one of the four starting 'backers to return.

5

Star rating for 6' 3", 221-pound freshman OLB **Caleb Kelly**.

572

Total yards for QB **Baker Mayfield** against **Tulsa** last year, a school record. His 4,105 yards as a junior (including 3,700 passing) ranks fifth among Sooners signal-callers.

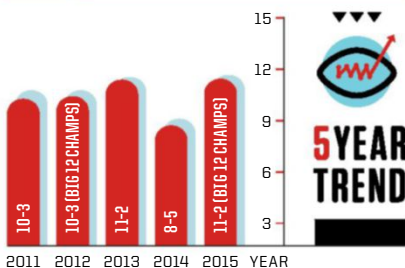
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Interceptions by now junior cornerback **Jordan Thomas**, the leader of the secondary, who also had 46 tackles.

2,102

Combined rushing yards for RBs **Samaje Perine** (1,349 as a sophomore) and **Joe Mixon** (753 as a freshman). Expect Mixon to get more than 113 carries and Perine fewer than 226.

## WINS



## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
AT HOUSTON

SATURDAY 9/10  
LOUISIANA-MONROE

SATURDAY 9/17  
OHIO STATE

BYE

SATURDAY 10/1  
AT TCU

SATURDAY 10/8  
TEXAS  
(IN DALLAS)

SATURDAY 10/15  
KANSAS STATE

SATURDAY 10/22  
AT TEXAS TECH

SATURDAY 10/29  
KANSAS

THURSDAY 11/3  
AT IOWA STATE

SATURDAY 11/12  
BAYLOR

SATURDAY 11/19  
AT WEST VIRGINIA

BYE

SATURDAY 12/3  
OKLAHOMA ST

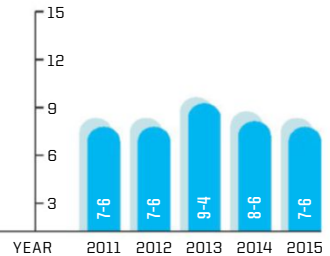
KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



## IMPACT NEWCOMER

A graduate transfer from Penn State, wide receiver **GENO LEWIS** brings some much-needed big-play ability to Norman. But the 6' 1" 205-pounder needs to get back to his 2014 form (55 receptions for 751 yards and two touchdowns) and forget about the '15 season, when he got passed on the depth chart and caught only 17 balls.





## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
RUTGERS

SATURDAY 9/10  
IDAHO

SATURDAY 9/17  
PORTLAND STATE

SATURDAY 9/24  
AT ARIZONA

FRIDAY 9/30  
STANFORD

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT OREGON

BYE

SATURDAY 10/22  
OREGON STATE

SATURDAY 10/29  
AT UTAH

SATURDAY 11/5  
AT CAL

SATURDAY 11/12  
USC

SATURDAY 11/19  
ARIZONA STATE

FRIDAY 11/25  
AT WASHINGTON  
STATE

■ KEY MATCHUP  
■ BIGGEST GAME

# WASHINGTON



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"They are incredible on defense. They've got good players, like [junior safety] **Budda Baker**, but more than that Chris Petersen and Pete Kwiatkowski, his defensive coordinator, are really good teachers. It's not surprising, because it was the same at Boise State. Their players are technically sound, and they play hard. You never really see them have a down game. They're multiple with their fronts, and they're so good on the back end that they can get away with bringing a lot of pressure. Oh, yeah, and the guys you're trying to block are often first-rounders.

They're replacing one of the best special teams coaches in the country [Jeff Choate, who

went to Montana State], but they've got explosive returners in **Dante Pettis** and **John Ross**. And that stadium—it's an advantage. When it's rolling, it's one of the hardest places to play. All that 12th man stuff with the Seahawks was going on at UW way before Seattle claimed it." □

## X-FACTOR



The 5' 11", 173-pound junior **JOHN ROSS** is the definition of versatility. As a sophomore, in 2014, he started seven games—four at corner, three at receiver—and scored seven touchdowns, including two on kick returns, that averaged 74.7 yards. He appears to have recovered from the right knee injury that forced him to miss last season.

38

Combined tackles last season for new starting linebackers Joe Mathis and Psalm Wooching, now seniors.

2.54

Sacks per game  
Washington gave up last year, 96th in the nation.

1,348

Yards for tailback Myles Gaskin, best among freshmen last season; his 14 rushing TDs were also tops in his class.

67.9

Completion percentage for Jake Browning as a freshman over the final six games of 2015. The Huskies went 4-2.

129

Tackles by 5' 10", 184-pound safety Budda Baker over the last two seasons. He also has three interceptions.

FAST FACTS

went to Montana State], but they've got explosive returners in **Dante Pettis** and **John Ross**. And that stadium—it's an advantage. When it's rolling, it's one of the hardest places to play. All that 12th man stuff with the Seahawks was going on at UW way before Seattle claimed it." □



8

HOUSTON



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"UConn dealt Houston its only loss last year by playing smashmouth football. That's the game plan to beat the Cougars. They didn't have quarterback **Greg Ward Jr.** for most of that game, which didn't help, but UConn still limited their possessions and pushed them around.

Ward is a dynamic runner; his acceleration and change of direction are among the best in college football. The strategy against them is to make him beat you by throwing it, gang-tackle him and do what you can to slow their tempo. Ward isn't very thick, but he can take a hit.

Defensively, the Cougars led the nation in takeaways [35], and they're a quintessential feast-or-famine team. Even Navy threw for more than 300 yards against them because they gamble and blitz so much. You have to take advantage with big plays. Last year they left their corners out on islands a lot, which made them susceptible to double moves. They run a ton of exotic blitzes, so you have to be ready for a safety or corner coming on third down.

Corner William Jackson led the nation with 23 pass deflections last year. He was so good, it allowed them to ignore his side of the field and concentrate on stopping what you did best. If they wanted to stop the run, they played five defensive linemen. They played with so much swagger on defense. Will they be able to maintain that without Jackson [first round, Bengals] and leading tackler Elandon Roberts [sixth round, Patriots]?" □

## FAST FACTS

**+21** The Cougars' turnover margin in '15, second best in the country.

**8th**

Rank against the run last season (108.9 yards per game).

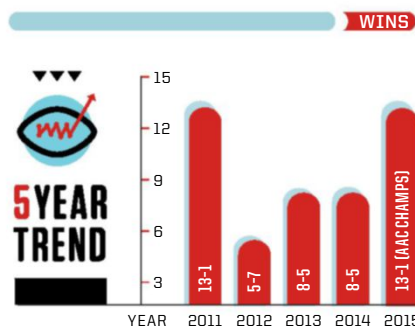
Seniors **B.J. Singleton** (tackle) and Cameron Malveaux (end) return to anchor the line.

**6**

Touchdowns scored in '15 by then junior corner Brandon Wilson—two on offense, two on defense and two on special teams.

**15.5**

Combined sacks as juniors last year for outside linebackers Steven Taylor and Tyus Bowser, who are both on the Butkus Award watch list.



## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
**OKLAHOMA**  
(AT NRG STADIUM)

SATURDAY 9/10  
**LAMAR**

THURSDAY 9/15  
**AT CINCINNATI**

SATURDAY 9/24  
**AT TEXAS STATE**

THURSDAY 9/29  
**UConn**

SATURDAY 10/8  
**AT NAVY**

SATURDAY 10/15  
**TULSA**

SATURDAY 10/22  
**AT SMU**

SATURDAY 10/29  
**CENTRAL FLORIDA**

**BYE**

SATURDAY 11/12  
**TULANE**

THURSDAY 11/17  
**LOUISVILLE**

FRIDAY 11/25  
**AT MEMPHIS**

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



## X-FACTORS

Houston had an electric scout team in 2015. Texas transfer **DUKE CATALON**, a 6-foot, 210-pound sophomore thumper at running back, bullied and bruised his teammates in practice. And Oklahoma State transfer **RA'SHAAD SAMPLES**, a 5' 11" junior jitterbug, looked so promising as a slot receiver that he may have influenced starter Demarcus Ayers's decision to leave early for the NFL. (Ayers went in the seventh round.) If they can deliver in real games, the Cougars will be even tougher.





## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
BOWLING GREEN

SATURDAY 9/10  
TULSA

SATURDAY 9/17  
AT OKLAHOMA

BYE

SATURDAY 10/1  
RUTGERS

SATURDAY 10/8  
INDIANA

SATURDAY 10/15  
AT WISCONSIN

SATURDAY 10/22  
AT PENN STATE

SATURDAY 10/29  
NORTHWESTERN

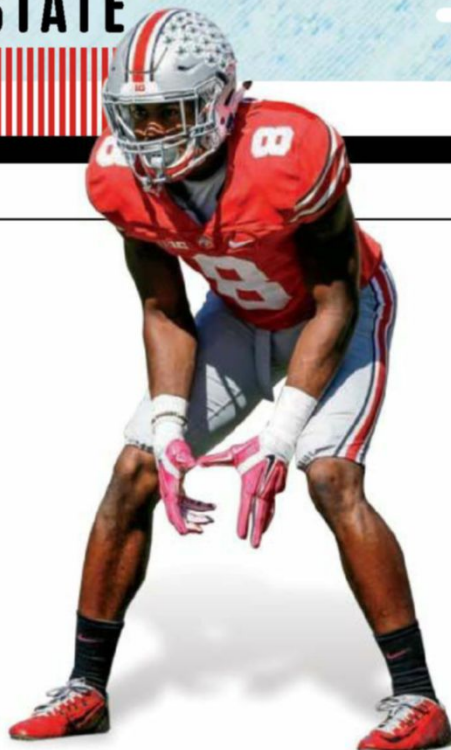
SATURDAY 11/5  
NEBRASKA

SATURDAY 11/12  
AT MARYLAND

SATURDAY 11/19  
AT MICHIGAN  
STATE

SATURDAY 11/26  
MICHIGAN

■ KEY MATCHUP  
■ BIGGEST GAME

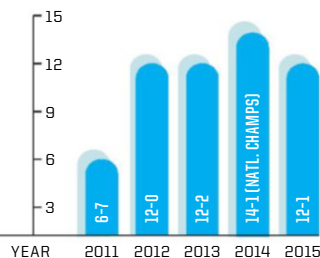


## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"This is going to sound weird because they finished No. 2 in scoring defense, but new co-coordinator Greg Schiano will make them better. His specialty at Rutgers was third-down pressure packages—finding creative ways to get to the quarterback. Ohio State will force more turnovers because of what he'll do on third down.

Last year you strategized around neutralizing Darron Lee at linebacker and keeping Joey Bosa from wrecking the game. I thought **Gareon Conley**, who returns at corner, and Eli Apple [the No. 10 pick in the draft] were similar talents. One way teams took advantage of them was by having the slot receiver run 10 or 12 yards downfield then cut to the sideline; the safeties struggled to cover that. They don't bring back any guys on the defensive line who are first-rounders like Bosa, so they'll have to make an adjustment there.

With **J.T. Barrett** entrenched as the starter at quarterback, Urban Meyer can get back in his comfort zone. As he did with Alex Smith at Utah and Tim Tebow at Florida, Meyer's going to challenge teams by forcing them to defend the quarter-



## IMPACT FRESHMAN

Joey Bosa came to Columbus in 2013 as the country's top defensive end recruit from St. Thomas

Aquinas in Fort Lauderdale, then was drafted No. 3 in April. Can his not-so-little brother, 6'3", 265-pound **NICK BOSA**, follow suit? This year's top end recruit, Nick brings refined technique, an explosive first step and powerful hands.

4

Rank of the Buckeyes' recruiting class. Coach Urban Meyer hopes 18 members will play as freshmen.

215

Weight, in pounds, of 5'10" freshman running back Mike Weber, who will have to replace Ezekiel Elliott as a runner and blocker.

67

Total touchdowns, in 17 starts, by junior quarterback J.T. Barrett.

766

Combined receiving yards of Curtis Samuel and Jalin Marshall as sophomores. Players who accounted for 80.0% of OSU's catches last year are no longer on the team.

49

Tackles by corner Gareon Conley, one of three returning starters from the FBS's second-ranked scoring defense.

▲ FAST FACTS

back run. They're really going to miss the experience of running back Ezekiel Elliott, especially in pass protection. I wonder how talented their offensive line will be. Last year left tackle Taylor Decker was the guy our staff really liked; no one else scared you. They'll miss Mike Thomas at receiver, but they have quality depth. That group is raw and young, but they can play." □

JOE ROBBINS/GETTY IMAGES



# 10 TENNESSEE



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"They've got two monsters in junior running backs **Jalen Hurd** (6' 4", 240 pounds) and **Alvin Kamara** (5' 10", 215). Hurd looks like a defensive end and Kamara is about as explosive as anyone in the country. And they've got an experienced offensive line. If I'm them, I'm going to rely heavily on the run because I can control the game that way. [Senior] quarterback **Joshua Dobbs** has plenty of experience, but he's more likely to beat you with his legs than his arm. You want to keep him in the pocket and make him throw. One of their best plays last season was running Dobbs, especially in the red zone. It's hard to defend that.

The defense has playmakers at every level. Outside linebacker **Jalen Reeves-Maybin** would have been selected in the first few rounds of this past NFL draft if he hadn't stayed for his senior year. Expect new coordinator Bob Shoop to bring some pressure, especially out of zone coverage. He certainly wants to load up the box and stop the run, which you better be able to do in the SEC.

Special teams-wise, they're one of the best in the country. [Senior cornerback] **Cameron Sutton** was first in the FBS in punt-return average last year, and [junior safety] **Evan Berry** led the country in kick-return average.

This is one of the most complete teams I've seen. They're the team to beat in SEC East." □

6

Consecutive victories to end 2015, the Volunteers' longest winning streak since '03.

5

Consecutive years that new coordinator Bob Shoop has led a defense that finished in the Top 25.

4

Running back Jalen Hurd's SEC rank last year in yards per game (99.1) and total yards (1,288) over 12 starts last year.

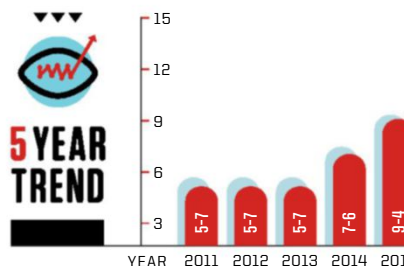
3

SEC players over the last 20 years to have 300 yards passing and 100 yards rushing in a game: Tim Tebow, Johnny Manziel and senior QB Joshua Dobbs.

5

Interceptions thrown by Dobbs in 2015, the least by a Vols starter since Peyton Manning had four in 1995.

FAST FACTS



## X-FACTOR

**PRESTON WILLIAMS** caught just seven passes as a freshman, in 2015 (he missed four games with a hamstring injury), but he led the team with an explosive 22.6 yards per catch. His first career grab was a 25-yard touchdown against Western Carolina. This spring Williams, a former five-star recruit, was the Volunteers' most improved receiver. If the imposing (6' 4", 209 pounds) wideout can develop into a consistent target, their offense will truly take flight.



## 2016 SCHEDULE

THURSDAY 9/1  
APPALACHIAN  
STATE

SATURDAY 9/10  
VIRGINIA TECH  
(IN BRISTOL, TENN.)

SATURDAY 9/17  
OHIO

SATURDAY 9/24  
FLORIDA

SATURDAY 10/1  
AT GEORGIA

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT TEXAS A&M

SATURDAY 10/15  
ALABAMA

BYE

SATURDAY 10/29  
AT SOUTH  
CAROLINA

SATURDAY 11/5  
TENNESSEE  
TECH

SATURDAY 11/12  
KENTUCKY

SATURDAY 11/19  
MISSOURI

SATURDAY 11/26  
AT VANDERBILT

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



# 11

## STANFORD



### 2016 SCHEDULE

FRIDAY 9/2  
KANSAS STATE

BYE

SATURDAY 9/17  
USC

SATURDAY 9/24  
AT UCLA

FRIDAY 9/30  
AT WASHINGTON

SATURDAY 10/8  
WASHINGTON STATE

SATURDAY 10/15  
AT NOTRE DAME

SATURDAY 10/22  
COLORADO

SATURDAY 10/29  
AT ARIZONA

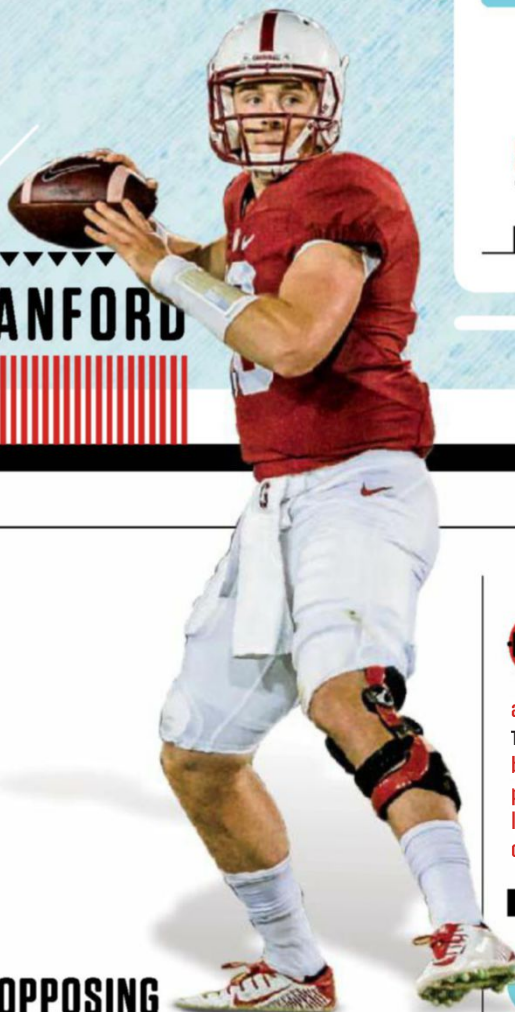
SATURDAY 11/5  
OREGON STATE

SATURDAY 11/12  
AT OREGON

SATURDAY 11/19  
AT CAL

SATURDAY 11/26  
RICE

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME

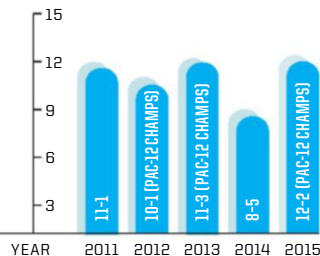


### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

“People try to make a big deal about them breaking in a new quarterback, but even with the new guy, likely **Keller Chryst**, they’re going to be damn good. With young QBs you don’t know what you’re going to get until they start playing—but you could have also said that before Andrew Luck took over. Chryst has such a big, strong arm, and he’s really athletic, too. They’ve got a great offensive line and a great back in **Christian McCaffrey**, so they’re not going to have to rely on Chryst to sling it. He’ll have time to get adjusted.

McCaffrey, he’s just awesome. He has everything: really good change of direction, good speed; he’s a complete football player. It doesn’t matter that everyone knows he’s going to get the ball. Really, it makes the play-action game so much scarier because if they can run, that’s when you see those big throws go over the top. And as a returner he solves a lot of problems. You can pretty much count on him bringing back a kick for a touchdown every few tries, and it’s like, Oh, crap, can we at least *try* to not kick it toward him?

Defensively, it’s wrong to say that they don’t



### FREAKIEST ATHLETE

Most human beings who check in at 6' 3" and 273 pounds cannot broad-jump 10' 2", run a 40-yard dash in 4.56 seconds and record a vertical of 34 inches. **SOLOMON THOMAS**, a senior defensive lineman, can. He also boasts just 8.1% body fat and does 30 reps bench-pressing 225 pounds. He had 10½ tackles for loss last year (with 3½ sacks). You don’t want him chasing you in the backfield. It will not end well.



Passes thrown by now

sophomore quarterback Keller Chryst, who’s the favorite to start. Five were completions.

34.0

The Cardinal’s average time of possession (in minutes) last season, tops in the country.



Starts for junior tight end Dalton Schultz, who has already been named to the John Mackey Award watch list.

36.3%

Third-down conversion rate of Stanford opponents last year, 45th best in the FBS.

FAST FACTS

have talent. Those dudes play so, so hard, and they’re so well-coached. They’ve been outstanding over the last four to five years because they’re so big and physical. Really, they’re the only ones who have solved the Oregon riddle consistently. They’re a nightmare because they’re not going to beat themselves.” □

DAVID MADSON/GETTY IMAGES



# 12

## NOTRE DAME



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"I'm curious about their starting quarterback. **DeShone Kizer** obviously led them to the Fiesta Bowl last year after **Malik Zaire's** early season-ending broken [right] ankle, but I think Zaire's the better runner and can really hurt you. They're really going to feel the losses of [left tackle] **Ronnie Stanley** and [receiver] **Will Fuller**, both first-round picks. I'm not sure who their game-breaking receiver is now.

Let's not kid ourselves: They're still Notre Dame. [Senior left tackle] **Mike McGlinchey** is good, but they're transitioning on the offensive line. Who's the running back going to be? They've got a lot of questions to answer. The influence of offensive coordinator Mike Sanford Jr. is apparent in the passing concepts they use, with the high crosses and shots down the field, as well as in the formations and motions. Yet there are still the staples of coach Brian Kelly's running game and quick passing game.

Defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder is like everybody else on first and second down, but he's more exotic than almost anybody on third down. He's got different fronts, and they blitz from everywhere. You have to get out in space and make them miss or max-protect and beat them one-on-one down the field.

Could they have a 10-2 record this season? Sure, but they could just as easily be 8-4." □

### FAST FACTS

18

Total catches in '15 for the 12 receivers on the roster other than **Torii Hunter Jr.**, who had 28 grabs for 363 yards as a junior.

835

Rushing yards gained by running back **Josh Adams**, a school record for a freshman.

106

Starts by three offensive lineman who are no longer on the team. Four of the top five receivers are gone too.

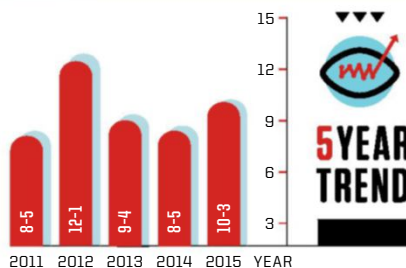
18

Combined starts for quarterbacks **Malik Zaire** (senior) and **DeShone Kizer** (junior). Zaire is 5-2 as a starter, while Kizer is 8-3.

56.7

Percentage of tackles made last season by players no longer on the roster. And 64.0% of the sacks left South Bend as well.

### WINS



### 2016 SCHEDULE

SUNDAY 9/4  
AT TEXAS

SATURDAY 9/10  
NEVADA

SATURDAY 9/17  
MICHIGAN STATE

SATURDAY 9/24  
DUKE

SATURDAY 10/1  
SYRACUSE  
(IN EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.)

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT N.C. STATE

SATURDAY 10/15  
STANFORD

BYE

SATURDAY 10/29  
MIAMI

SATURDAY 11/5  
NAVY  
(IN JACKSONVILLE)

SATURDAY 11/12  
ARMY  
(IN SAN ANTONIO)

SATURDAY 11/19  
VIRGINIA TECH

SATURDAY 11/26  
AT USC

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



### X-FACTOR

A preseason right MCL tear limited defensive tackle **JARRON JONES** to 13 snaps last season, all in the Fiesta Bowl. A stress fracture in his left foot idled him for spring practice. Now Notre Dame needs the 6' 5½", 315-pound senior to regain the form he flashed in 2014, when he had 7½ tackles for loss. Jones's length not only makes him difficult to contend with in interior spaces but also makes him a special teams weapon: He has blocked four field goal attempts in his career.



13

MICHIGAN  
STATE

## 2016 SCHEDULE

FRIDAY 9/2  
FURMAN

BYE

SATURDAY 9/17  
AT NOTRE DAME

SATURDAY 9/24  
WISCONSIN

SATURDAY 10/1  
AT INDIANA

SATURDAY 10/8  
BYU

SATURDAY 10/15  
NORTHWESTERN

SATURDAY 10/22  
AT MARYLAND

SATURDAY 10/29  
MICHIGAN

SATURDAY 11/5  
AT ILLINOIS

SATURDAY 11/12  
RUTGERS

SATURDAY 11/19  
OHIO STATE

SATURDAY 11/26  
AT PENN STATE

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME

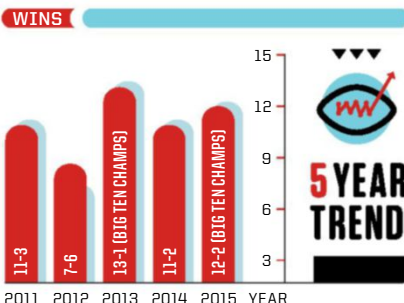
**1** Maximum number of combined starts the Spartans' offensive tackles will have going into the season after former right tackle Kodi Kieler moved to center for his senior year.

**43** Receptions as a junior last season by R.J. Shelton, the only returning wideout with more than two catches in '15.

**10** Games missed last year by corner Vayante Copeland, who's back for his junior season after a vertebrae injury.

**6** Years in school for senior OLB Ed Davis, who was sidelined for all of '15 with a torn ACL; he was third on the team in tackles for loss (12) and sacks (seven) two years ago.

**280** Weight of 6' 6" tackle Malik McDowell, the lone returning starter on a line that held opponents to 3.0 yards per carry or fewer six times in '15.



FAST FACTS



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"You hear it all the time, but Mark Dantonio is a heck of a coach. As usual, he's got a very physical team. They take care of the football and aren't greedy. They're not worried about tempo and all the flash. They just kind of beat you into submission and get you to surrender as fast as they can. They do a great job of personnel groupings and mixing their plays. They use their personnel about as well as anybody I've ever seen.

That will help take some of the pressure off the new quarterback. [Senior] **Tyler O'Connor** started the Spartans' upset of Ohio State on the road last season. He's a solid passer who can run some, but no matter who starts, I'm sure Dantonio will play to his team's strengths, which means running the ball. They've got three very capable backs in [sophomore] **LJ Scott**, [junior] **Gerald Holmes** and [sophomore] **Madre London**, but I imagine the bruising [6-foot, 238-pound] Scott will be an even bigger force this season. With their experience on the interior offensive line, it'll be tough slowing down their ground attack.

On defense their first priority remains stopping the run. **Malik McDowell** [junior] is a monster who'll be playing on Sundays next season. [Senior] linebacker **Riley Bullough** is a tackling machine, and having back [linebacker] **Ed Davis** will help. The secondary could be the best the Spartans have had since 2013." □

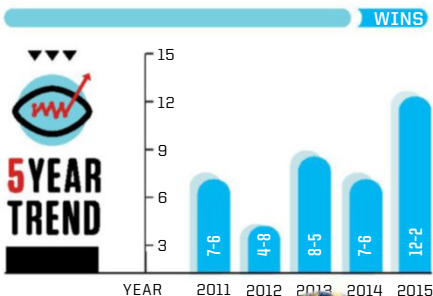
## IMPACT FRESHMEN



Wide receivers **DONNIE CORLEY** and **CAM CHAMBERS** were four-star recruits. Both have size—Corley is 6' 3" and 185 pounds, Chambers 6' 3" and 207—and both enrolled last January to get a jump on learning the offense. If even one of them can develop into a downfield threat in the early going, it will provide a vital outlet in preventing opponents from ganging up on the run.

JOE ROBBINS/GETTY IMAGES





## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"In his first year as a starter, [senior] **C.J. Beathard** surprised last season when he opened with 12 straight wins. He's a pretty accurate passer who makes his receivers better. He's also got an unreal ability to keep plays alive with his feet. He's just dangerous enough to scare you. I saw recently that offensive coordinator Greg Davis said Beathard could be the best quarterback he's ever coached. That's something, considering Davis had Vince Young and Colt McCoy at Texas.

As usual, they'll have one of the nation's best offensive lines. It doesn't matter who they lose there, because they just plug in guys. The same applies to running back because of their run-first scheme and how good they are up-front.

I like their linebackers—they were a little young last year, but they've got good length and are more athletic than you think. They also do a good job rerouting receivers and are sure tacklers. They're very fortunate **Desmond King** didn't leave after last season for the NFL. He's a real playmaker, not just in coverage but also as a returner.



### X-FACTOR

**C.J. BEATHARD's health.** He played most of last season at half speed because of a hernia—which required surgery last January—and still showed he's an NFL-caliber QB. His vast trick-shot arsenal lets him get the ball off in tough situations.

8

Interceptions by now senior cornerback Desmond King, who also had 72 tackles to earn the '15 Thorpe Award.

155

Consecutive passes—over five games—without a pick by C.J. Beathard, who threw for 2,809 yards and 17 touchdowns.

24.6%

Passing offense accounted for by receiver Matt VandeBerg, who caught 65 balls for 703 yards as a junior in 2015.

9

Tackles per game for outside linebacker Josey Jewell as a sophomore, tied for 35th in the country.

121.4

Rushing yards allowed per game last season, 15th best in the nation.

FAST FACTS



### 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
MIAMI (OHIO)

SATURDAY 9/10  
IOWA STATE

SATURDAY 9/17  
NORTH DAKOTA STATE

SATURDAY 9/24  
AT RUTGERS

SATURDAY 10/1  
NORTHWESTERN

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT MINNESOTA

SATURDAY 10/15  
AT PURDUE

SATURDAY 10/22  
WISCONSIN

BYE

SATURDAY 11/5  
AT PENN STATE

SATURDAY 11/12  
MICHIGAN

SATURDAY 11/19  
AT ILLINOIS

FRIDAY 11/25  
NEBRASKA

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME

They're tough because they'll shorten the game and just beat you up physically. You've got to force their offense into passing situations. That gets them out of their rhythm. And you better attack their defense in space to see if you've got any advantages speedwise—that's how Stanford routed them in the Rose Bowl. I just don't know if anyone in the Big Ten West can do that." □



# 15

## LOUISVILLE



### 2016 SCHEDULE

THURSDAY 9/1  
CHARLOTTE

FRIDAY 9/9  
AT SYRACUSE

SATURDAY 9/17  
FLORIDA STATE

SATURDAY 9/24  
AT MARSHALL

SATURDAY 10/1  
AT CLEMSON

BYE

FRIDAY 10/14  
DUKE

SATURDAY 10/22  
N.C. STATE

SATURDAY 10/29  
AT VIRGINIA

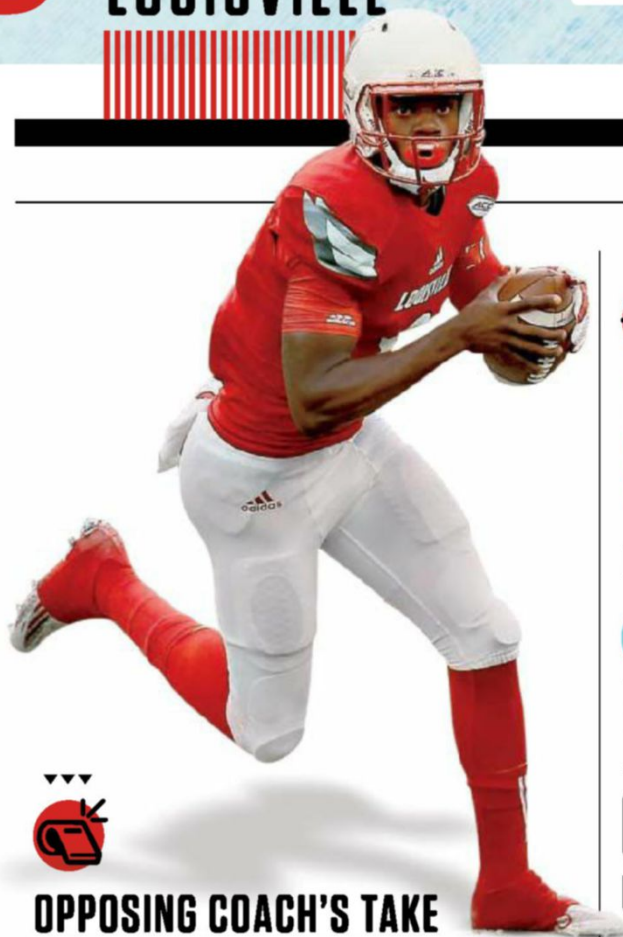
SATURDAY 11/5  
AT BOSTON  
COLLEGE

SATURDAY 11/12  
WAKE FOREST

THURSDAY 11/17  
AT HOUSTON

SATURDAY 11/26  
KENTUCKY

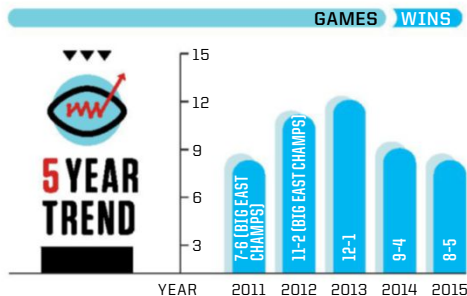
■ KEY MATCHUP  
■ BIGGEST GAME



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"If you're going to win a championship, you'd better have a good quarterback. And they do in Lamar Jackson, one of 18 starters back from a year ago. He can throw it, and he can beat you with his feet. He's dangerous because he creates so many issues for opposing defenses, especially when he gets out of the pocket. You've always got to account for him with an extra defender in the box, which puts even more pressure on your secondary. Bobby Petrino's a great offensive coach, and while you may think he's going to throw it all over the place, he's got a very physical team, one that's going to run the ball first.

They've got tons of athletes defensively. Their team speed is tremendous, and they're very physical up front. Their secondary does a really good job in coverage and in taking away the easy-access throws. [Senior] safety Josh



### FREAKIEST ATHLETE



At 6' 4" and 242 pounds, senior outside linebacker **DEVONTE FIELDS** has been timed at 4.62 in the 40, which explains how the TCU transfer was able to collect 11 sacks and 22½ tackles for loss last season. With added strength and a year under his belt in Todd Grantham's defense, he'll put up even more staggering numbers.

6

Wins in their final seven games of 2015, lifting them to 8-5.

3

Consecutive years the Cardinals have ranked in the Top 25 in total defense.

960

Rushing yards last season for Lamar Jackson as a freshman, breaking the school's career record for a quarterback.

27

Minimum point total for Louisville in each of its final five games, raising its scoring average from 24.4 points to 28.7.

638

Receiving yards in '15 for then junior Jamari Staples, a UAB transfer, which led the team.

FAST FACTS

**Harvey-Clemons** is so big at 6' 5" that he looks like he should be lining up at end. Their defensive backs dare you to beat them one-on-one.

That's just the nature of coordinator Todd Grantham. He's an aggressive guy who likes to blitz. But it's imperative that you don't let his high-pressure tactics make you one-dimensional offensively. That's what he wants." □

ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES



# 16

## GEORGIA



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"The defense shouldn't have much of a learning curve because [former coordinator] Jeremy Pruitt ran a very similar scheme to what Kirby Smart is bringing from Alabama. Kirby's defenses at Alabama were so well-coached. And because you know where they're going to be, you've got to find a way to use that against them. You have to find ways to exploit that and make some plays where they're not expecting them to come from. Smart won't have the depth up-front that he had at Alabama. He's not going to be able to roll in fresh guys without a drop-off, and he's got a lot of questions to answer on the line. What he does have is guys in the secondary who have played a lot of football. They had the top defense against the pass last year. It's a good bunch, especially [junior] safety **Dominick Sanders**.

[Coordinator] Jim Chaney is going to make that offense tougher, and they're going to have more of an identity. They're going to run the ball. They'll use formations to create mismatches and some shifts to make you move. And when they have [running backs] **Nick Chubb** [747 yards in six games] and **Sony Michel** [1,161] back there, they're scary. Chubb may take a few games to regain his form [left knee], but he'll get there. It's hard to know what they're going to do at quarterback. [Freshman] **Jacob Eason** is talented, but [senior] **Greyson Lambert** is steady." □

### FAST FACTS

1

Rank in pass defense last year (156.5 yards per game). Every starting DB is back, led by safety **Dominick Sanders**, who had six picks.

8.1

Yards per carry for running back **Nick Chubb** before he hurt his left knee in Week 6 as a sophomore last year.

3

Sacks for then sophomore OLB **Davin Bellamy**, who must fill the pass-rushing void after the departures of **Leonard Floyd** and **Jordan Jenkins**.

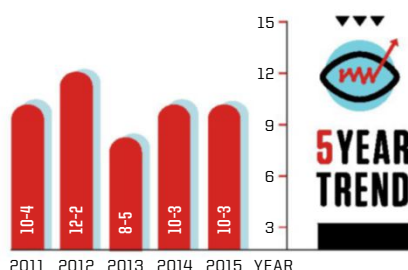
10-2

Record with QB **Greyson Lambert** starting as a junior in '15, though he could lose his job.

7

Average first-season wins of the last eight coaches hired in the SEC. Kirby Smart is making his debut in Athens.

### WINS



### X-FACTOR

Will Georgia coaches hand the offense over to freshman quarterback **JACOB EASON**? And if they do, when? Eason has a special right arm, which could help the Bulldogs regain their balance on offense. In 2015 they ran 60.0% of the time, and rushing accounted for 51.0% of their yardage. Georgia has enough talent at running back and on the line to make that formula work against most opponents, but to win championships, the passing game must carry more of the load.



### 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
NORTH CAROLINA  
(IN ATLANTA)

SATURDAY 9/10  
NICHOLLS STATE

SATURDAY 9/17  
AT MISSOURI

SATURDAY 9/24  
AT OLE MISS

SATURDAY 10/1  
TENNESSEE

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT SOUTH CAROLINA

SATURDAY 10/15  
VANDERBILT

BYE

SATURDAY 10/29  
FLORIDA  
(IN JACKSONVILLE)

SATURDAY 11/5  
AT KENTUCKY

SATURDAY 11/12  
AUBURN

SATURDAY 11/19  
LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE

SATURDAY 11/26  
GEORGIA TECH

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME





## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
SOUTHEASTERN  
LOUISIANA

SATURDAY 9/10  
CENTRAL  
MICHIGAN

SATURDAY 9/17  
PITTSBURGH

SATURDAY 9/24  
AT BAYLOR

SATURDAY 10/1  
TEXAS

SATURDAY 10/8  
IOWA STATE

BYE

SATURDAY 10/22  
AT KANSAS

SATURDAY 10/29  
WEST VIRGINIA

SATURDAY 11/5  
AT KANSAS  
STATE

SATURDAY 11/12  
TEXAS TECH

SATURDAY 11/19  
AT TCU

BYE

SATURDAY 12/3  
AT OKLAHOMA

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME

# 17

## OKLAHOMA STATE



### 2

Rank in school history for junior quarterback Mason Rudolph in completions (264), attempts (424), yards (3,770) and yards per game (290.0).

5 Returning starters on the offensive line.

# 20.5

Yards per catch last year for WR James Washington, 10th most nationally; he led the FBS with four 70-plus-yard receptions.

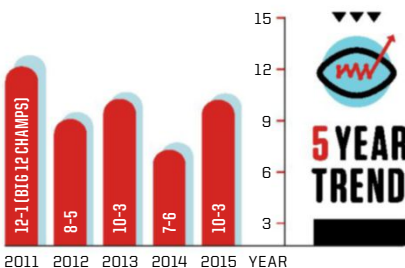
### 32

Sacks the offensive line allowed last season, 90th most in the nation; Cowboys rushers gained only 3.58 yards per carry.

# 211

Tackles by safety Jordan Sterns, now a senior, over the last two seasons (108 in '15).

WINS



FAST FACTS



## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"I think they will be one of the top teams in the conference, depending on what they do with the defense. If you have one elite pass rusher, like they had last year in [Emmanuel] Ogbah [second round, Browns], then you can disrupt any offense. Ogbah was getting so much attention that it freed up other guys to make plays. It will be interesting to see how they get pressure this season. Their scheme is good. It's smart, it stresses you and it makes you earn your yards. You have to play really well to move the ball.

They have three or four outstanding wide-outs, which is the strength of their team. I thought [junior] **James Washington** was one of their most improved players, and he hurt our team on deep balls last year. The big question is how will they replace [slot receiver] David Glidden [57 catches, 866 yards], who signed with the Falcons. [Junior quarterback] **Mason Rudolph** is an NFL-caliber talent. He stands in the pocket well, is accurate as all get-out and [at 6' 5" and 235 pounds] has a physical presence. If their line improves and they can improve their ability to run the football, they will be a dangerous offensive team.

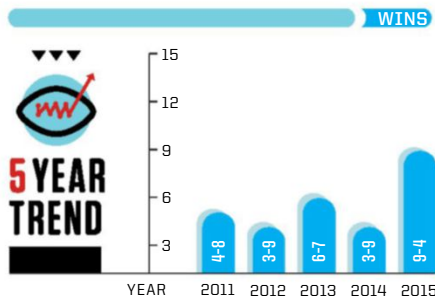
Coach Mike Gundy has got a really good program, and I don't see a reason why they won't be there at the end. They always surprise people." □

## X-FACTOR



Fans in Stillwater are curious to see if graduate transfer running back **BARRY J. SANDERS** can help the Cowboys become less one-dimensional. He never earned the starting role during his four years at Stanford (a total of 672 yards on 115 carries) but, if nothing else, having the son and namesake of the school's greatest player on the roster will conjure memories of the good old days.





WASHINGTON  
STATE

18



## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
EASTERN  
WASHINGTON

SATURDAY 9/10  
AT BOISE STATE

SATURDAY 9/17  
IDAHO

SATURDAY 9/24

BYE

SATURDAY 10/1  
OREGON

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT STANFORD

SATURDAY 10/15  
UCLA

SATURDAY 10/22  
AT ARIZONA  
STATE

SATURDAY 10/29  
AT OREGON STATE

SATURDAY 11/5  
ARIZONA

SATURDAY 11/12  
CALIFORNIA

SATURDAY 11/19  
COLORADO

SATURDAY 11/25  
WASHINGTON

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME

## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"It's the same pass-happy, Air Raid offense that coach Mike Leach has always run. He's all about leverage of the defenders. He's going to run his spacing routes and then his crossing routes. He puts a lot in the receivers' hands—they have to read the leverage of the guys covering them. They do a damn good job and the quarterback knows exactly where to throw it.

[Junior] **Luke Falk** is probably more talented than some of Leach's past signal-callers, but it's hard to know because he doesn't read anything, he just runs through progressions. Falk took way too many hits last year, and I'm sure he will again this season, but protection has always been a huge issue for Leach's quarterbacks.

Falk and his receivers are so quick throwing the ball that it talks you out of blitzing them a lot. The teams that hit Falk the most last season did it using three-man rushes and dropping eight in coverage, which made him hold the ball longer. [Senior wide receiver] **Gabe Marks** is dangerous outside, and their inside possession receivers do exactly what's expected: catch the ball, get whacked and carry on.

Defensively, their strength has always been their big linemen, and they've got another budding star in [sophomore] end **Hercules Mata'afa**. Senior safety **Shalom Luani** isn't great in coverage, so you want to attack him, but he's a sure-tackling, heavy hitter. If you can run and make them pack the box, I'd take matchups all day against their corners in man coverage, which they don't play much.



## IMPACT NEWCOMER

There's plenty of buzz about tailback **JAMES WILLIAMS**, who sat out last season to recover from a knee injury he suffered as a senior at Burbank (Calif.) High. The 5' 11", 195-pound freshman moves well laterally, can break tackles and has reliable hands. He's the sort of dual-threat back that has prospered under coach Mike Leach.

11

Tackles for loss in '15 by MLB Peyton Pelluer, now a junior and the only returnee in double digits.

5.7

Yards per carry for now junior RB Gerard Wicks, who'll be pushed for playing time by 5' 10", 195-pound freshman James Williams.

74

Passing attempts by Luke Falk in a 45-38 double-OT win over Oregon, his highest total last season. As a junior he had four of the five games with the most attempts in the FBS.

4.9

Yards per carry allowed by the Cougars last year, seventh in the Pac-12. Two of four starting D-linemen are back.

94.5%

Red zone scoring percentage, which was second nationally.

They went 9-4 last season but I thought the whole Pac-12 was down, so I'm not sure they were much better than when they went 3-9 in 2014. This year they might be an even better team, but they might not have as good a record." □



# 19

## OLE MISS



### 2016 SCHEDULE

MONDAY 9/5  
**FLORIDA STATE**  
(IN ORLANDO)

SATURDAY 9/10  
**WOFFORD**

SATURDAY 9/17  
**ALABAMA**

SATURDAY 9/24  
**GEORGIA**

SATURDAY 10/1  
**MEMPHIS**

BYE

SATURDAY 10/15  
**AT ARKANSAS**

SATURDAY 10/22  
**AT LSU**

SATURDAY 10/29  
**AUBURN**

SATURDAY 11/5  
**GEORGIA  
SOUTHERN**

SATURDAY 11/12  
**AT TEXAS A&M**

SATURDAY 11/19  
**AT VANDERBILT**

SATURDAY 11/26  
**MISSISSIPPI  
STATE**

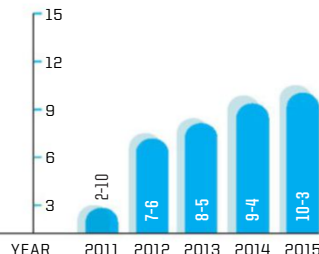
KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"They try to spread you out to make you think pass, pass, pass, but they're a run-first team—it's all smoke and mirrors. You want to hit [senior] **Chad Kelly** because he's not just a running quarterback; as he's running, he's always looking downfield. And he's got good receivers—Laquon Treadwell wasn't the only guy they had. **Damore'ea Stringfellow** is big and physical. **Evan Engram** is a tight end, but he'd be a receiver at a lot of other places. That makes him tough to cover. So when Kelly is running around behind the line of scrimmage, your cover guys have got to keep covering. Your linemen have to keep their feet on the ground and not go for the pump fake. If you get a chance to hit him, you've got to make him think about running again.

On defense they'll get after your ass. They're faster than Alabama. Where Bama will just play you straight up, Ole Miss will run a lot of stunts and twists on their line because those guys move so well. Their rotation guys at tackle were



### IMPACT FRESHMAN

When the Rebels signed the nation's top-ranked offensive tackle recruit in 2013, Laremy

Tunsil, he started on the left side immediately. Now the No. 1 tackle from the class of '16, 6' 6", 326-pound **GREG LITTLE**, is poised to succeed Tunsil. If Little doesn't line up at left tackle for the season opener, he'll probably be starting on the right side.

8

Returning starters (three on offense, five on D), the fewest of any SEC team.

0

Thousand-yard rushers since '09; senior Akeem Judd (421 yards, 5.5 yards per carry) and junior Jordan Wilkins (379, 5.3) will try to end the streak this year.

16-1

Quarterback Chad Kelly's preseason Heisman odds. As a junior he threw for 4,402 yards, with 31 touchdowns and 13 picks.

108

Points by which the Rebels outscored foes in the first quarter in '15 (147-39).

14

Yards per catch in 2015 for receiver Damore'ea Stringfellow, a junior who has to replace the departed Laquon Treadwell (1,153 yards), who was the No. 23 pick.

FAST FACTS

pretty good last year, but this year they'll have to make up for not having Robert Nkemdiche. [Junior end] **Marquis Haynes** is really fast off the edge. And getting [senior] safety **Tony Conner** back [from a right-meniscus tear] is huge. He makes plays everywhere."

BUTCH DILL/AP





## OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"Trevone Boykin was absolutely tremendous at getting out of bad plays, and they won't have that dynamic anymore. [Junior] **Kenny Hill** and [sophomore] **Foster Sawyer** will battle for that spot. They have a lot of new faces, but I don't think they'll change their scheme much. [Co-offensive coordinators] Doug Meacham and Sonny Cumbie are good at throwing new wrinkles into game plans each week, and they play at a fast pace, which stretches the defense. A lot of kids have played the last couple of seasons, so even though they lost a bunch of players, those returning guys will be comfortable. I like [sophomore receiver] **KaVontae Turpin**. He's explosive, and they use him well on speed sweeps and reverses.

Defense, that's their bread and butter. When you're playing TCU, you better have some new stuff, and you better be able to execute it. If you just try what you ran the week before, [coach Gary] Patterson will know what's coming. They have a couple of blitzes, but for the most part they just do what they do so well. And they'll be so much better this season because they had so many injuries last year and were missing a lot of guys. One player they get back is [junior cornerback] **Ranthonny Texada**. He's so good, they can stick him on your best guy then roll coverage the other way. Patterson and his staff don't get enough credit for developing talent." □

### FAST FACTS

4.8

Yards per rush last year for 5' 10", 210-pound Kyle Hicks, a junior who'll need to carry the offense while the new QB settles in.

562.8

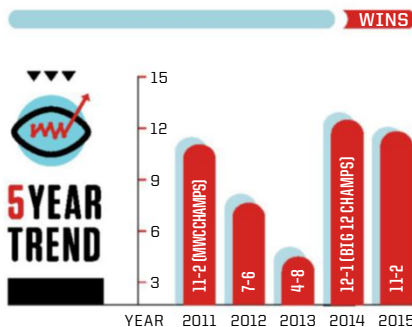
Yards per game last season, third best in the FBS.

21.5

Combined career sacks for senior defensive ends Josh Carraway, the 2015 team leader with nine, and James McFarland, the '14 team leader with seven, who missed last year with a broken toe.

191

Combined tackles in '15 for OLB Travin Howard (105), now a junior, and MLB Ty Summers (86), a sophomore.



## X-FACTOR

TCU will have to replace wide receiver Josh Doctson, a first-round pick in April's NFL draft, by committee, and teammates believe **EMANUEL PORTER**, a 6' 4", 210-pound junior, will be one of the prime contributors. Porter, who had 14 catches for 213 yards and three TDs a year ago, can sky above defenders, and he spent the off-season getting stronger. He won't lead the Horned Frogs in receiving yards, but look for him to make big plays in big moments.



## 2016 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 9/3  
SOUTH DAKOTA  
STATE

SATURDAY 9/10  
ARKANSAS

SATURDAY 9/17  
IOWA STATE

FRIDAY 9/23  
AT SMU

SATURDAY 10/1  
OKLAHOMA

SATURDAY 10/8  
AT KANSAS

BYE

SATURDAY 10/22  
AT WEST  
VIRGINIA

SATURDAY 10/29  
TEXAS TECH

SATURDAY 11/5  
AT BAYLOR

BYE

SATURDAY 11/19  
OKLAHOMA  
STATE

FRIDAY 11/25  
AT TEXAS

SATURDAY 12/3  
KANSAS STATE

KEY MATCHUP  
BIGGEST GAME



# 21

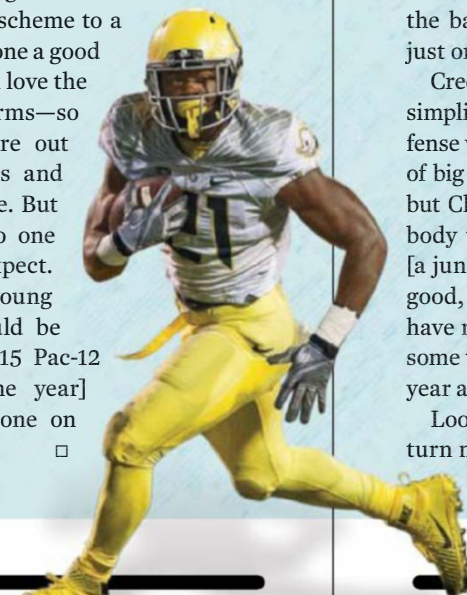
## OREGON



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"They'll be interesting because they hinge on an unknown at quarterback [fifth-year senior **Dakota Prukop**], but the last time that happened [with Vernon Adams in 2015], it turned out pretty well. Their tailback, **Royce Freeman**, is special and underappreciated. He's that unique combination of size, strength and speed, and he's just a flat-out stud. Their wideouts are good too, but Oregon wants to run the ball first; that's always been their M.O. Their tempo is an advantage too. When they first started playing with it, no one knew it or understood how to replicate it. Now eight teams in the conference run it, but Oregon is still going faster than everybody else.

New DC Brady Hoke is a big personality and a good coach. He'll be good for them. They're changing their scheme to a 4-3, but that staff has done a good job recruiting—kids still love the success and the uniforms—so they'll be able to figure out what their personnel is and use it to their advantage. But the first few games, no one can be sure what to expect. The secondary was young last year, so they should be better, but without [2015 Pac-12 defensive player of the year] DeForest Buckner, no one on the defense is scary." □



# 22

## NORTH CAROLINA



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

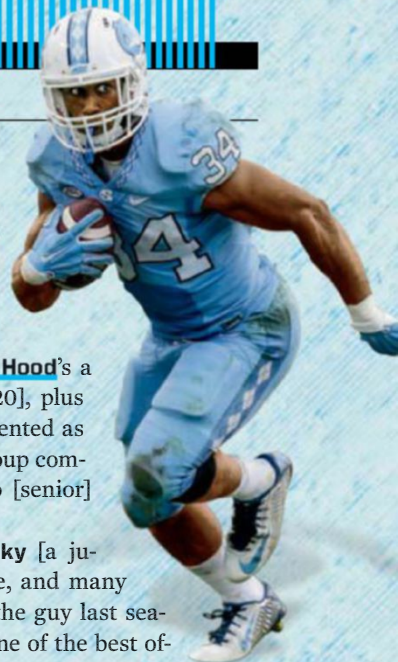
"It's no secret their advantage is having an offense that can score a lot of points.

[Junior running back] **Elijah Hood**'s a big, physical type [6-foot, 220], plus their receiving corps is as talented as there is. It's a tall, athletic group complemented nicely by dynamo [senior] **Ryan Switzer** in the slot.

Quarterback **Mitch Trubisky** [a junior] has valuable experience, and many thought he was going to be the guy last season. Coach Larry Fedora is one of the best offensively, especially with tempo and running the ball. That's a challenge, because they're not just one of those pass-happy spreads.

Credit defensive coordinator Gene Chizik for simplifying what's primarily a 4-3 scheme. The defense was a train wreck in 2014. They gave up tons of big plays and there was a lot of finger-pointing, but Chizik helped change that. There's really nobody that scares you. Cornerbacks **M.J. Stewart** [a junior] and **Des Lawrence** [a senior] are pretty good, but their front seven is still developing. They have recruited well, however, so there's definitely some talent. As bad as they were against the run a year ago, you have to think that'll be an emphasis.

Look out on special teams; Switzer is a punt return nightmare." □



### WEAKEST LINK

Last year FCS transfer Matt Hegarty started at center, but he's gone and now **JAKE HANSON**, a 6' 5", 288-pound redshirt freshman who played tackle at Eureka (Calif.) High, will have to handle the snapping and line calls. Hanson looked good in the spring, but how he functions in live game action will impact the Ducks' season.



### WEAKEST LINK

The bad news: The Tar Heels finished 10th or worse in the ACC in sacks, run defense and third-down D last fall. The good news: Four starters among their front seven are gone. Can the coaches coax improvement out of the three returning linemen? Can tackle **JALEN DALTON**, a top 100 recruit, mature quickly?



# 23

## UCLA



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"The Bruins lost eight players to the NFL draft, but [sophomore] quarterback **Josh Rosen** still gives them a chance. He's smart, so when he has a ton of time, he's really good. Bang him up and he tends to force things. New offensive coordinator Kennedy Polamalu's more pro-style attack should actually suit Rosen better. But it's hard to blend a no-huddle, fast-paced, bubble-screen vertical game with a two-back, power, play-action pass game. It'll be interesting to see how that evolves.

Defensively, they lost special guys but also have special ones back. If [junior] defensive lineman **Eddie Vanderdoes** is fully recovered from his [left] ACL injury, he's a huge problem and changes their whole defense. As talented as their D has been, it has kind of reflected their offense the last couple of years: There was a ton of athleticism but not a lot of physicality. Running right at them is a key.

Safeties **Randall Goforth** [a senior] and **Jaleel Wadood** [a junior] headline a stacked secondary. I don't know if you're going to get many big plays because they have such good speed on the back end, but you've got to keep chipping away.

There's times they look like the best team in the country. A week later they don't look interested. If they show up dialed in, good luck." □



### IMPACT FRESHMAN

Versatile OLB **MIQUE JUAREZ**, who flipped from USC to UCLA, looks like the perfect replacement for Myles Jack, who left for the NFL after his junior year. Although the Bruins bring back all of their starting 'backers from a year ago, the 6' 2", 230-pound Juarez, who enrolled early, is expected to see immediate playing time.

# 24

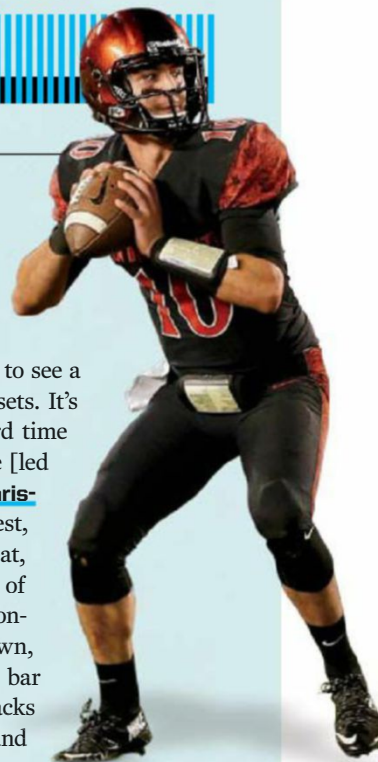
## SAN DIEGO STATE



### OPPOSING COACH'S TAKE

"Think Stanford on offense. What they want to do is bludgeon people; you are going to see a lot of two-tight-end, two-back sets. It's unusual, and teams have a hard time defending it. The passing game [led by sophomore quarterback **Christian Chapman**] is average at best, but it doesn't need to be great, because the offense is in a lot of third-and-twos. They'll try to control the clock and wear you down, so you have to be ready for a bar fight. The problem is running backs **Donnel Pumphrey** [a senior] and **Rashaad Penny** [a junior] are so good that they can take it to the house at any time.

Schematically, they are a little bit unusual on defense too with that 3-3-5. [Coach] Rocky Long has been running a version of it forever. The difference is, they are so physical and they play so fast, I don't know if there is a team in America that pursues the ball better. Scheme counts for something, but what makes them great is the effort, the heart and the passion that they play with. There isn't anyone on their defense that's intimidating, but when the ball's snapped, they fly around like you wouldn't believe. I think San Diego State could be the Houston of this year." □



### X-FACTOR

For the Aztecs to grow, at least one go-to receiver must emerge. While 6' 3", 205-pound junior **CHRISTIAN CUMBERLANDER** has the size and tools, the likelier candidate is 6-foot, 180-pound junior **MIKAH HOLDER**, who pulled down 24 passes for 439 yards last year. He's the team's top returning receiver, but he needs to become more reliable.





## X-FACTOR

Although senior outside linebacker Ben Weaver led the team in tackles in 2015, 6'1", 227-pound middle linebacker

**TANNER VALLEJO** will be the key to the D. The senior's quickness, pass-rushing skills and ability to slip blocks make him a rare three-down player and earned him a spot on the Butkus Award watch list.

# 25 BOISE STATE



SEAN M. HAFEEY/GETTY IMAGES (SPERBECK); TONY GUTIERREZ/AP (GARETT); GUS RUEL/ASAP (SMITH-SCHUSTER)



## OPPOSING COACH'S STAKE

"They've been the standard for the Group of Five, but they're not the same animal they have been. Don't get me wrong, they're still damn good, but last season, for the first time in a while, they lost games they should have won.

They've got new co-offensive coordinators in Scott Huff and Zak Hill, but it doesn't really matter, because coach Bryan Harsin is heavily involved offensively. He wants to throw the ball around out of the shotgun. Their [sophomore] quarterback, **Brett Rypien**, was impressive last year. He's going to be one heck of a player, but he's not very mobile.

If you decide to pressure Rypien, you better make

sure you can cover their receivers one-on-one, a really good group led by crafty [senior] **Thomas Sperbeck**. They're also a real big deception team, so you've got to be prepared for trick plays.

There's a ton of questions on defense with just five starters back. And there's a new defensive coordinator, Andy Avalos; we expect him to run a 3-4 scheme. Their line has been overhauled, but they'll be fierce in the secondary with ball-hawking safeties **Cameron Hartsfield** [a junior] and **Chancellor James** [a senior]. Kicker **Tyler Rausa** and punter **Sean Wale**, both seniors, are outstanding, which is a real advantage.

They don't make a lot of mistakes, but they're a beatable team. If they're going to be the Boise of old, it'll depend on their defensive line." □

## SI'S ALL-AMERICAS

### OFFENSE

**QB** DESHAUN WATSON  
CLEMSON, JUNIOR  
The Heisman finalist gained 5,209 yards in '15.

**RB** LEONARD FOURNETTE  
LSU, JUNIOR  
He ran for 1,953 yards.

**RB** DALVIN COOK  
FLORIDA ST., JUNIOR  
He edges Christian McCaffrey of Stanford.

**WR** JUJU SMITH-SCHUSTER  
USC, JUNIOR  
He led Power 5 receivers in '15 with 1,454 yards.

**WR** CALVIN RIDLEY  
ALABAMA, SOPH.  
He had 89 grabs and 1,045 yards.

**TE** JAKE BUTT  
MICHIGAN, SENIOR  
He could've gone as early as the second round in April.

**T** RODERICK JOHNSON  
FLORIDA ST., JUNIOR  
He was the ACC's top blocker in '15.

**G** DAN FEENEY  
INDIANA, SENIOR  
In his three years as a starter, he has allowed one sack.

**C** PAT ELFLEIN  
OHIO STATE, SENIOR  
He's moving from guard.

**G** QUENTON NELSON  
NOTRE DAME, SOPH.  
He's young, but he's reliable and has a mean streak.

**T** CAM ROBINSON  
ALABAMA, JUNIOR  
He was first-team all-SEC last year.

### DEFENSE

**DL** MYLES GARRETT  
TEXAS A&M, JUNIOR  
With 24 sacks, he's a contender for the top pick.

**DL** MALIK MCDOWELL  
MICHIGAN ST., JUNIOR  
He's the best DL on a top defensive team.

**DL** JONATHAN ALLEN  
ALABAMA, SENIOR  
He has 26 TFLs in the last two years.

**LB** JABRILL PEPPERS  
MICHIGAN, SOPH.  
He's a linebacker, but he'll play all over the field.

**LB** DEVONTE FIELDS  
LOUISVILLE, SENIOR  
He had 11 sacks and 64 tackles last year.

**LB** RAEKWON MCMILLAN  
OHIO STATE, JUNIOR  
He led OSU with 119 stops in '15.

**LB** REUBEN FOSTER  
ALABAMA, SENIOR  
He's as good against the pass as the run.

**CB** DESMOND KING  
IOWA, SENIOR  
He won the Jim Thorpe Award as a junior.

**CB** JOURDAN LEWIS  
MICHIGAN, SENIOR  
He had 22 passes defended last season.

**S** DERWIN JAMES  
FLORIDA ST., SOPH.  
As a freshman he had 91 tackles with 9½ TFLs.

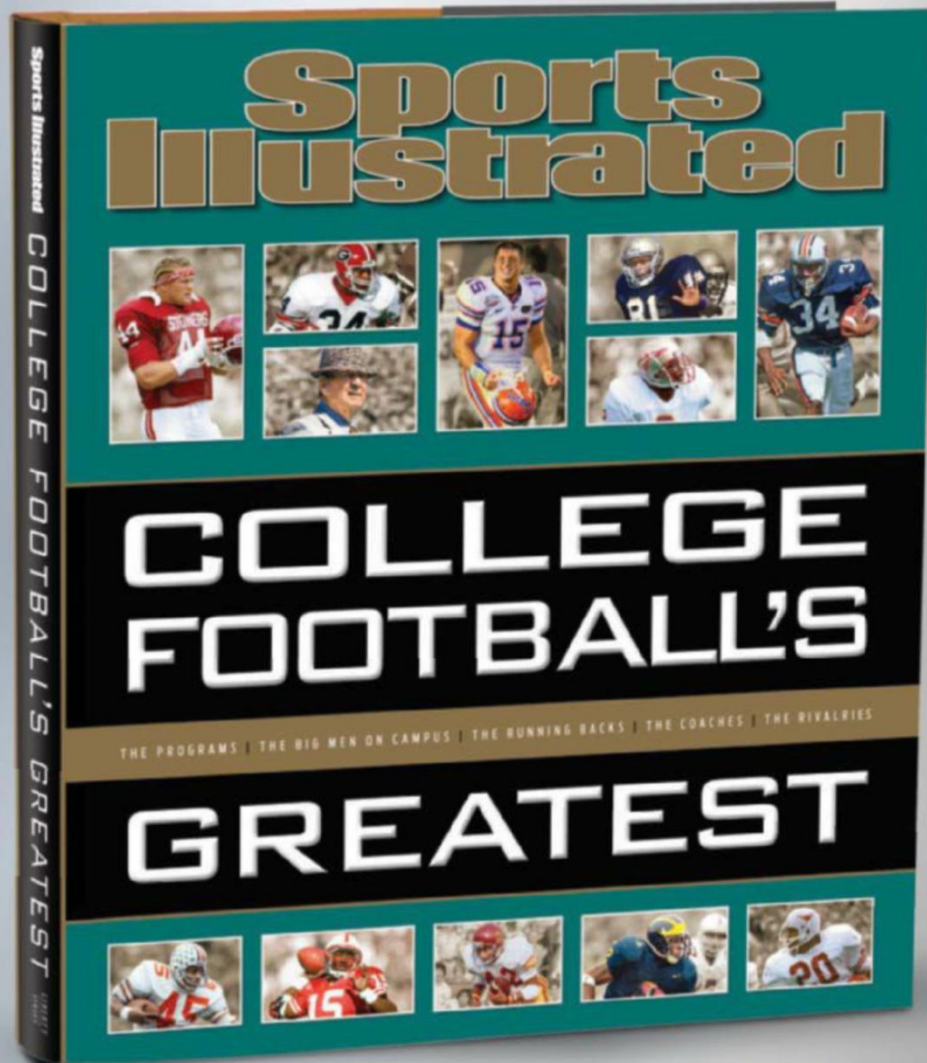
**S** BUDDA BAKER  
WASHINGTON, JUNIOR  
Has the speed to cover the whole field.





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# Almost Famous

→ BY FRANZ LIDZ

*“One day somebody will ask: ‘Whatever happened to, ah, Whatshisname? You know, the one who was so big. The number-one fella a couple of years ago. He was famous. How can we forget a name like that?’”*

—Mel Miller (Walter Matthau) in *A Face in the Crowd*

**IN THE STONE AGE** of American sport, when basketball still had a set shot and SPORTS ILLUSTRATED ran a column on bridge, I was briefly Whatshisname. The No. 1 fella in Little League. A bona fide contender for FACES IN THE CROWD.

You know Faces, that staple of SI that spotlights ordinary athletes who have done something extraordinary. This issue marks SI’s 62nd anniversary, and it’s been 60 years since the first of those 19,000 or so grass-roots stars appeared in the magazine. The name for the column derived from *Some Faces in the Crowd*, a 1953 short-story collection by Budd Schulberg, the Oscar-winning screenwriter who wrote a prizefighting story for the very first issue of SI (Aug. 16, 1954).

To appreciate how far I’d come to merit Face-time, you should know that as an eight-year-old on Long Island, I was thought by my fellow sandlotters to have as much of a chance of cracking the starting lineup as the mom who brought the Kool-Aid. I got in games just after the moon came up, when my coach tired of hearing my mother scream, “Play fair. Put my boy in.” One day I was a late-inning sub at second base. No outs, runners on first and second. The kid at the plate hit a high pop behind the pitcher. I dived and came up with the ball. The guy going from second to third froze. I tagged him. Two outs. I stepped on second base out of confused habit, then raced for the fat kid running back to first. I beat him by four steps.

Suddenly, I was hoisted in the air, even though I hadn’t scored a run and we were still losing 17–0. I’d made an unassisted triple play! I’d be in the record books! The umpire autographed the ball. My coach said, “Take it home, son, and tell your parents you didn’t steal it.”

He asked me if I wanted to be a Face in the Crowd. “Sure,” I



The first item  
I listed under  
“Accomplishments”  
was “Very nearly a  
Face in the  
Crowd.”



What’s your  
closest brush  
with athletic  
greatness?

Join the  
discussion  
on Twitter  
by using  
#SIPointAfter  
and following  
@SINow

said, though I had no idea what he was talking about. Evidently he sent a letter about my feat to SI, because a week or so later someone from the magazine called my house. He asked my mother to mail a photo of me to the editorial offices in New York City. She picked out a remarkably indistinct snapshot—my triple-play trophy in one hand, a box turtle in the other—and stuck it in an envelope.

Alas, my mom was at the end of a six-year battle with cancer. She was in the hospital more than out of it. In the chaos of her shuttling, SI was forgotten. Six months later she died. Maybe six months after that, I found the envelope at the bottom of a pile of papers. She had never mailed it.

It would be another 15 years before I mailed my résumé to SI. The first item I listed under “Accomplishments” was “Very nearly a Face in the Crowd.” Somehow, my CV landed on the desk of Gil Rogin, SI’s sublimely idiosyncratic managing editor. My interview consisted of me telling Rogin about my triple play, and him telling me that I could have a job if I could screw the cap off a bottle of orange juice. Which, with a flick of the wrist, I did. “When do I start,” I asked. As it turned out, the following week. I remained on the writing staff for 27 years.

Naturally, my first assignment was to choose the athletes who would become Faces in the Crowd. And my last, in 2007, was to interview Schulberg at his home in the backwaters of Long Island, where my journey began. Spry and peppery and 93, Schulberg saw boxing, with its theatrical shifts of fortune, as a metaphor for life. At the time, his own life was riding a fresh bubble of fame: He and Spike Lee were collaborating on a script about the first Joe Louis–Max Schmeling fight, in 1936. “If you live long enough,” Schulberg told me, “everything comes around.” □



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